

Locating Intergenerational Sense of Self: Intersections of Genealogy  
with Leisure and Tourism

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## Abstract

Situated at the intersection of leisure and tourism, there is currently a renewed interest and curiosity in ancestral lineages. Focusing on amateur genealogists who pursue, and travel for, a leisure engagement of genealogy, this qualitative research study endeavours to investigate their quests for personal identity and locations of an intergenerational sense of self. With the adoption of a narrative inquiry method, life story interviews were conducted with four amateur genealogists. Findings from an analysis of the narratives have been organized into five core themes, each of which contributes to our understanding of these amateur genealogists' experiences of leisure and travel. While the amateur genealogists do not acknowledge their leisure engagements as a quest for personal identity, they make use of such engagements to locate an intergenerational sense of self and gain enriched self-understandings. Moreover, by facilitating intersections of genealogy, leisure, and tourism, several key insights are offered that may be of particular interest to scholars in both fields of study.

*Keywords:* genealogy; leisure; tourism; identity; narratives; intergenerational sense of self

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In order to know who one is and where one is going,  
one must know where one has come from.

- Adage (in Basu, 2007, p. 157)

### **Introduction**

Humans are, and always have been, mobile. The theme of mobility has long been acknowledged by social scientists as visible in the phenomena of exploration, trade, migration, displacement, exile, expatriation, travel, and journeying. It has been only since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that scholars have endeavoured to explore the relationship between the field of tourism studies and the study of “mobilities” in other disciplines (Franklin & Crang, 2001; Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006). One of the most intriguing outcomes of this effort is the focus placed on the interplay of tourism, migration, diaspora, and identity (see Coles & Timothy, 2004a). The research undertaken on this nexus has significantly eased the transition into examining themes and issues that confront present and future studies of tourism. A theme of interest in this research study, and one that stems from the aforementioned nexus, is the intersection of genealogy, leisure, and tourism.

Genealogy is the pursuit of tracing ancestral lineages or family lines of descent (Nash, 2002). The traditions of this practice permeate much of human history, as evidenced by its manifestation in a number of different historical epochs and cultures (Erben, 1991). Yet, the popularity of genealogy in post-colonial settler societies over the last five decades has been so enduring that genealogy resurges as something of a late modern phenomenon. Within the scope of leisure studies, some individuals in late modern, or “liquid modern” (Bauman, 2000, p. 199), society are drawn to genealogy as a leisure engagement. Aside from efforts by Horne (2002), Stebbins (2005), and Fulton (2009) to bridge genealogy with the study of leisure, intersections of genealogy and leisure are mostly unacknowledged. This inattention to genealogy is comprehensible given the extensive range of engagements that engulfs the leisure literature. Like that of all leisure engagements, genealogy is highly contextual and retains its own qualities, complexities, and dissimilarities. Our understandings of genealogy as a leisure

engagement, however, may be limited if not disengaged from the singularity of mainstream leisure perspectives. This is not to say that such perspectives are insufficient and without value. It is to say, rather, that studies of leisure should not be confined to singular perspectives deriving from within the field. A contemporary interpretation of genealogy as a leisure engagement necessitates enhancing the analytic capacity of leisure theory by facilitating intersections with closely aligned fields of social enquiry such as tourism studies.

Efforts to intersect genealogy and tourism have been relatively piecemeal in the last decade. Interest in examining genealogy from a tourism perspective has been justified by observations of both the popularity of genealogy as a leisure pursuit and the accompanying growth in travel for genealogy and family history-related purposes (Basu, 2007; McCain & Ray, 2003; Santos & Yan, 2010; Timothy, 2008). It is also an interest that stems from continuing efforts by tourism scholars to understand the ways in which tourism influences, and is influenced by, complex social and cultural processes (Franklin & Crang, 2001). The contributions of tourism scholars to the study of genealogy have produced only a small body of research that has neither a clear conceptual foundation nor a well-defined theoretical trajectory. While their studies have unquestionably furthered understandings and enriched multidisciplinary perspectives (viz., from anthropology, geography, library and information science, and sociology) on the subject of genealogy, such scholars neglect genealogy as a leisure engagement and overlook the capacity of leisure studies to inform analyses of travel and tourists.

Literature examining the definition and nature of tourism is the domain in which relationships between leisure and tourism have been formed (Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003a). Although tentative intersections have been sketched between concepts in leisure and tourism (Fedler, 1987; Leiper, 1979; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Moore, Cushman & Simmons, 1995; Singh, 2005; Smith & Godbey, 1991), research in both fields continues to be carried out in isolation from one another. When the gap is narrowed, like in the case of behavioural and psychological studies of tourists and leisure participants (see Carr, 2002), it may be inferred that “tourism holds the promise of delivering the benefits that leisure enshrines” (Singh, 2005, p. 1). Encouraging intersections of genealogy, leisure, and tourism is therefore more sensible than preserving their isolation.



An examination of such intersections should be viewed as fundamental for the reason that it can reveal new understandings, contribute to theory building, and, ultimately, enhance the depth of our knowledge on the genealogy phenomenon.

### **Background of the Study**

The contemporary world is characterized by a proliferation of people who experience varying degrees of displacement and ambiguous location (Coles & Timothy, 2004b; Urry, 2000). Interestingly enough, the composition of populations in almost every country is presently a collection of diasporas (Bauman, 2011). The term “diaspora” is in original reference to the Jewish population exiled from Palestine and resettled outside of the homeland of Israel. In its current usage, diasporas denote communities of settlement defined with regard to a movement or migration away from a homeland. The settlement of diasporas in host countries, over the course of time, has transitioned the composition of populations in such countries into an aggregate of multiple cultures and diverse ethnicities (Cohen, 1997). This social condition, in conjunction with a globalized world wherein culture and ethnicity take on a “hybrid” or “creolized” form (Hall, 1996; Hannerz, 1992), enmeshes the descendants of diasporic migrants living in host countries in questions of identity (see Giddens, 1991). Of course not all descendants ask the same sort of questions of their identities. Identities are presumed to be secure or unproblematic when unquestioned, and uncertain or problematic when questioned (Tilley, 2006). For those descendants who ask questions of identity, it is a problematization of their personal identity, as well as of their primordial or predetermined ethnic identities (Basu, 2007; Nash, 2002; Timothy & Guelke, 2008).

In host countries of diasporic settlement, such as Canada, hyphenated and hybrid identities are a celebrated part of an ethnically diverse and multicultural society. With an official government policy on multiculturalism, Canada, in particular, boasts and acknowledges diversity as a way to build citizenship and deepen loyalty to the country (Driedger, 1996). Even as Canadians possess citizenship and loyalty ties to their home country, and identify strongly with a national ethnic identity, some of them may not have fully relinquished their ancestral ethnicities (Howard-Hassman, 1999). Ancestral ethnicities, on the other hand, do not always withstand the fleeting qualities of time

(Waters, 1990). Those Canadians who uphold their ancestral ethnicities are supported in attempts to strengthen ties with diverse ethnic origins and encouraged to retain ancestral cultural heritages. Transnationalism is a clear example of the different ways in which Canadians maintain ethnic and cultural ties to their former homelands. Hence, personal reasons for pursuing interests and curiosities in familial heritage and ancestral lineages tend to always intersect with broader social, cultural, and political processes (Nash, 2002).

The practices of leisure and tourism afford diasporic descendants the opportunity to pursue their interests and curiosities, and, to embark on a quest of finding answers to identity questions. As Tilley (2006) sees it, questions of identity are like a task or project, “and the solution to this problem is to try and do something about it” (p. 10). Tourism practices are frequently represented as a quest for authenticity, for the Other, and for sustainability, but seldom are these practices likened to a quest for identity. The quest metaphor has been particularly evocative in the secular pilgrimages of diasporic descendants who travel to an ancestral homeland in search of roots and identity (Basu, 2004a), identified here as roots-seeking tourism. This quest for identity by diasporic descendants also lends to genealogy-tracing tourism, defined loosely as a distinct niche of tourism in which amateur genealogists travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy and for the gathering of supplementary historical and biographical information on their ancestors’ lives. The genealogy-tracing tourist and roots-seeking tourist, as quest-seekers who mostly disapprove of their “tourist” label (Basu, 2007), are both intently engrossed with their ancestral origins. What distinguishes the genealogy-tracing tourist from the roots-seeking tourist is that the former is not exclusively centred on a quest for a primordial ethnic identity, nor is this tourist always compelled to travel to an ancestral homeland. Rather, some amateur genealogists, and perhaps some genealogy-tracing tourists as well, may embark on a quest for personal identity via their family histories (Nash, 2002; Timothy & Guelke, 2008).

Personal identity, as inextricably linked to social identity, refers to the meanings an individual attributes to the self (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2007). It may be defined as “a sense of self built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as the property of the person”

(Hewitt, 1997, p. 93). While the concept of social identity has been employed in studies on the role of tourism in relation to local, regional, and national identities (Desforges, 2000), the concept of personal identity has been significant in studies on the role of tourism for lifestyle travellers, long-haul tourists, and backpackers (Cohen, 2010a; Desforges, 2000; Noy, 2004). Yet, the study of personal identity is not the sole preserve of such tourists (Cohen, 2010a). In order to expand the scope of studies on personal identity beyond the above-mentioned tourist niches, this research study undertakes an investigation into the narratives of amateur genealogists. Although it deliberately draws on tourism as an important theoretical underpinning, this study is intentional in its purpose to not place tourists—specifically genealogy-tracing tourists—at the fore. Rather, it is concerned with amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity. This *mélange* of interests originates from an understanding that leisure, tourism, identity, and narratives constitute some of the most meaningful dimensions of genealogy (Basu, 2004b; Lambert, 1996; Santos & Yan, 2010; Yakel, 2004).

### **The Problem: Explained and Stated**

Theoretical conjectures on amateur genealogists who experience an “identity quest” (Timothy & Guelke, 2008, p. 6) necessitate more clarification by scholars working under the purview of heritage tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2006). The personal and subjective experiences of the amateur genealogist—specifically with respect to travel—currently elude our understandings of genealogy-tracing tourism (Timothy, 2008). As a special interest niche of heritage tourism (McCain & Ray, 2003; Santos & Yan, 2010; Timothy, 2008), genealogy-tracing tourism is situated within a vast corpus of heritage tourism literature that generally refrains from investigating the experiential component of the phenomena under study (Caton & Santos, 2007). It is only in recent years that experiences of heritage tourism, and of tourism more generally, are comprising the focus of empirical research (Caton & Santos, 2007; Rickly-Boyd, 2009). Hence, the experiences of amateur genealogists who travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy still warrant a great deal of research attention.

Founded on the current state of research in genealogy-tracing tourism, it is believed that genealogy-tracing tourists are relatively less dislocated spatially than temporally, in comparison to spatially dislodged roots-seeking tourists. This distinction between the two tourists signifies that the former is more engrossed with ancestral origins in a temporal sense than a spatial sense. Thus, amateur genealogists may question their personal identities and engage in, as well as travel for, genealogy in order to bridge a temporal gap of discontinuity between a personal present and an ancestral past (see Lambert, 1996; Meethan, 2004). In other words, a quest for personal identity by amateur genealogists may suggest that such individuals seek to temporally locate a sense of self within a broadly conceived family history narrative (Basu, 2004a, 2007; Erben, 1991; Hareven, 1978; Santos & Yan, 2010). So as to grasp the significance of desires to locate a sense of self in narrative, attention must ultimately be given to notions of “temporal dislocation” (see Pickering & Keightley, 2006).

The momentum with which genealogy and genealogy-tracing tourism are experiencing as subjects of interest may be directed at the intertwined dynamics of continuity and discontinuity (Bauman, 2011). Though the condition in which contemporary individuals find themselves may not yet be a “crisis of discontinuity”, it is still one that causes some of them to question “who they are [and] where they came from” (Timothy, 2008, p. 117). Issues of this nature have been conceived as consequential to a waning historical consciousness (Huyssen, 1995), a vanishing of generational memory (Hareven, 1978), and a loss of a sense of succession from generations “originating in the past and stretching into the future” (Lasch, 1979, p. 5). Experiences of loss, not unlike the one underscored by Lasch (1979), are endemic in late modern society (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Breathnach (2006) calls our attention to a certain loss which has been shown to be quite problematic—that of “a generational sense of self” (p. 101). This loss, together with a multitude of other critical losses (Santos & Yan, 2010), has intensified at a time when the acceleration of social and cultural change focuses on movement toward the future, and, concurrently, away from the past (Zerubavel, 2003). Such conditions have “triggered an unmistakably *conservative* urge” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 38, italics in original) to bridge the gaps of discontinuity that currently exist between generations of the past and present. In counterpart to this

“disorientation from any sense of continuity” (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 920), a leisure engagement of genealogy may reveal itself to be a viable means for locating a generational sense of self.

Gaining insight into Breathnach’s (2006) notion of a generational sense of self (see Lasch, 1979) requires determining what constitutes a generation. One conception of generation is that it is a succession of relational lines of descent based on the biological fact of birth. An expanded conception of generation establishes that the experiences of a generation are contextually specific to that generation. In this sense, generations possess a collectively shared assumption of common experience and a common time frame in history (Corsten, 1999; Mannheim, 1952). Fivush, Bohanek, and Duke (2008) propose that a sense of self, though constructed from a personal history and a generational history, is not limited solely to the personal and generational. Our personal histories, as well as our history as a distinct generation, are embedded in a broad temporal framework. In other words, a personal history and a generational history do not exist in their own sheltered isolations. They are understood, by these three researchers, to exist in a society of multiple histories and multiple generations which intersect and interact. Therefore, an “intergenerational self” (Fivush et al., 2008, p. 132) is constructed not only by understanding our own personal experiences and histories, but also by understanding the experiences and histories of other people and generations (Fivush et al., 2008).

This qualitative research study investigates the narratives of amateur genealogists in order to understand their quests for personal identity and locations of an intergenerational sense of self. Since this sense of self has yet to be investigated in the context of genealogy, Breathnach’s (2006) understandings of a generational sense of self are supplemented with Fivush et al.’s (2008) concept of an intergenerational self. Both concepts, on the other hand, are under-theorized and “still in need of a great deal of explication” (Fivush et al., 2008, p. 141). Due in part to its conceptual meaning, the term “intergenerational sense of self” is employed henceforth. In proposing that amateur genealogists quest for personal identity by locating an intergenerational sense of self, it is particularly appropriate to analyze this proposition with special consideration for the relationship between self, identity, and narratives. Narratives, accordingly, play an

important role in addressing the theoretical gaps that currently limit our attempts to make sense of the social world of amateur genealogists.

### **Research Question and Purpose of the Study**

The research question that guides this study emerges from the theoretical gaps that concern the heritage tourism literature, as well as a multidisciplinary literature on the genealogy phenomenon. Subsequently, the research question is: how do amateur genealogists—who embark on a quest for personal identity—convey their understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self? The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity.

### **Engaging Genealogy as Leisure: Intersections of Genealogy and the Serious Leisure Perspective**

The serious nature of some leisure engagements, as well as some special interest tourist activities (Weiler & Hall, 1992), is at the centre of the theoretical framework of serious leisure. Though strongly driven by this dimension of seriousness, the framework is a systematic model that observes what individuals do in their leisure time and classifies such behavioural acts into one of three forms: serious leisure, casual leisure, or project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2007). All forms of leisure, whether serious, casual, or project-based, converge around a core engagement—an engagement which encompasses “distinctive sets of interrelated actions or steps that must be followed to achieve an outcome or product that the participant finds attractive” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 1). The core leisure engagement of focus in this research study is, of course, genealogy.

While the “serious leisure perspective” (SLP; Stebbins, 2007, p. 1) has influenced several strands of research in the leisure studies field (viz., focusing on chess, shopping, dance, volunteer fire-fighting, dog sports, etc.), little effort is being made to examine the congruence of genealogy with theories and concepts from this framework. As yet, there is also scant empirical evidence in the literature to support a classification of genealogy (see Fulton, 2009; Horne, 2002; Stebbins, 2005, for classifications of genealogy as serious or

project-based leisure). To be forthright, this research study does not commence with the assumption that genealogy *is* serious leisure (Gallant, Arai & Smale, 2013), nor does it set out to gather evidence which would confirm genealogy *as* serious leisure. Research of this kind is the hallmark of a qualitative ethnographic field study (see Stebbins, 2007) or quantitative measurement scales (see Gould, Moore, McGuire & Stebbins, 2008, for an overview of the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure). So as to understand how amateur genealogists engage in genealogy as leisure, worthwhile insights are to be gained by facilitating an intersection between the SLP and the narratives constructed by amateur genealogists.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

It is important to make explicit the assumptions that are only implicitly communicated in this research study. These assumptions are statements about theories—pertaining especially to amateur genealogists—that have been understood to be acceptable and justifiable for conducting this study. They are as follows:

1. It is assumed that amateur genealogists (viz., as the descendants of diasporic migrants living in post-colonial settler societies) ask questions of their personal identities.
2. It is assumed that, upon asking questions of their personal identities, amateur genealogists embark on a quest for personal identity via their family histories.
3. It is assumed that amateur genealogists (viz., as individuals who are temporally dislocated) seek to locate an intergenerational sense of self within a broadly conceived family history narrative.
4. It is assumed that a family history narrative can be employed to locate amateur genealogists' intergenerational sense of self.
5. It is assumed that the narratives constructed by amateur genealogists are an appropriate means through which to investigate their leisure engagements of genealogy, their travels for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and their quests for personal identity.

## Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided so as to ensure there is no ambiguity throughout the remainder of this study. Only those definitions not accompanied by a citation have been formulated by the researcher.

*Family history narrative:* A particular type of discourse that comprises the stories of a family's history.

*Genealogy:* The pursuit of tracing ancestral lineages or family lines of descent (Nash, 2002).

*Genealogy-tracing tourism:* A distinct niche of tourism in which amateur genealogists travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy and for the gathering of supplementary historical and biographical information on their ancestors' lives.

*Intergenerational (sense of) self:* "A self that is defined as much by one's place in a familial history as a personal past" (Fivush et al., 2008, p. 132).

*Leisure engagement:* The act of engaging in leisure which is uncoerced, intentional, and satisfying or fulfilling (Stebbins, 2007).

*Narrative:* Texts organized thematically by plots (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995).

*Personal identity:* "A sense of self built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as the property of the person" (Hewitt, 1997, p. 93).

*Quest:* A search or pursuit carried out in order to find or discover something.

*Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP):* A formal grounded theory that synthesizes three forms of leisure (i.e., serious leisure, casual leisure, and project-based leisure) into one holistic framework (Stebbins, 2007).

In presenting the background, the problem, the research question, the purpose, and the assumptions of this study, it is now possible to carry the current investigation forward. Directing our attention toward a relevant base of multidisciplinary literature, the following review is divided into two sections. Each section seeks to expand upon many of



the key terms that have just been identified, and, together as a whole, it sets the context for this investigation of genealogy, leisure, tourism, identity, and narratives.

## Chapter 2: Conceptual Foundation and Review of Related Literature<sup>1</sup>

### **Conceptual Roots of Contemporary Genealogy and Genealogy-Tracing Tourism**

The first section of this chapter aims to provide a relevant conceptual foundation of contemporary genealogy and genealogy-tracing tourism for the purpose of linking the social structures of late modern society to the “personal troubles” (Mills, 1959), or existential preoccupations, of a growing number of diasporic descendants who embark on a quest for personal identity and seek to locate an intergenerational sense of self. Rather than referring to self and identity throughout this discussion as common-sense concepts, it is appropriate to review the process of self and identity formation. Self and identity should not be isolated from the society of which they are a part, and so it is essential that both be profiled as subjects of modern and postmodern theory. These theories extend, moreover, to a consideration of the interplay between self, narratives, and identity, which allows for an understanding of the significance of narratives that shape, and are shaped by, social life.

**Self and identity formation.** Understanding the process of self and identity formation prompts a discussion of the work of G. H. Mead, whose symbolic interactionist approach expanded and enhanced the contributions to social theory of James (1890) and Cooley (1902), and on the whole established much of the groundwork for current thinking on self and identity (Stets & Burke, 2009). In *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead (1934/1962) found the mind to emerge and develop out of experience with its social environment. The mind, as an embodied cognitive mechanism, is described by Jenkins (2008) as “the sum of our organized processes of consciousness, communication and decision-making” (p. 52). It is through internal processes of the mind and external symbolic interactions with the social environment that human beings begin to see themselves as objects, who then initiate actions with other physical and social objects. Meanings evolve through interaction, between a minimum of two individuals, in a succession from the unconscious communication of symbolic gestures to the conscious

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this chapter has been published.  
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communication of language. Language, acknowledged in its contemporary form as a formal system of complex communication, is the communicator of significant symbols or vocal gestures that permits an individual to respond and be responded to. To experience another person's response is what Mead regards as "taking the attitude" or taking the position of the other. In his distinction between the "I" and the "Me", Mead identifies the Me as an object of consciousness that appears in social experiences with others. The I is an acting or processual subject that functions in response to the attitudes of others and appears indirectly when social experiences are considered retrospectively. This reflexive process of becoming both subject and object is what gives rise to consciousness of the self (Stets & Burke, 2009).

Individuals experience internal dialogues between the I and the Me from the perspective of members of their social groups. The "generalized" other, as Mead named it, is embodied in the Me. In other words, the Me internalizes a composite set of roles that derive from a rigidly structured society (Stets & Burke, 2009). In order to explain the importance of these roles, McCall and Simmons (1966) integrate both the I and Me to formulate the concept of a role-identity, defined as "the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position" (p. 65). Social positions, or categories (e.g., gender, race, religion, sexuality, age, etc.), form the basis for locations of identity (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Contrary to the situational approach of traditional symbolic interactionism that views society as a "relatively undifferentiated, cooperative whole" (Stryker & Serpe, 1982, p. 206), Stryker (1980) presents an observation of society as stable in patterns of behaviour that, over time and across populations, have created a complexly differentiated yet organized structure of groups, organizations, communities, and institutions. These patterned social arrangements signify that identities are complexly organized and differentiated as well (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). That is, identities are constructed in interaction with others, located in recognizable categories, and negotiated in relation to other related, complimentary, or counter identities (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Jenkins, 2008; Stryker, 1980).

This review thus far comprises a succinct outline of a symbolic interactionist approach to identity theory. Such an approach is introduced for the reason that it distinguishes between self and identity, and yet, also establishes their reciprocal relation.

So as to be clear, the self is a reflexive phenomenon that develops in symbolic social interaction, whereas identity refers to the meanings an individual attributes to the self through contextually specific interactions. Furthermore, as part of their relations with a plethora of others, individuals have multiple selves and identities for all social roles or positions held. These multiple selves and identities are, in sum, the dramaturgical realization (Goffman, 1959) of a process of internal definition and external definition by others in a structured society that is constantly in motion (Jenkins, 2008; Stryker, 1980). The performance of self and identity, particularly in late modern society, results in a widespread expression of doubt (see Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991). This doubt concerns the extent to which there is coherence and continuity of self and identity over time, and a meaningful sense of belonging to collective communities (Baumeister, 1997; Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974; Giddens, 1991). The manifestation of such an expression necessitates not only description but also exposure to the critical theories posed by postmodernists.

**Self, identity, and (post)modernity.** In the historical moments preceding the early modern age, traditional communities were characterized by self-reliance, homogeneity, face-to-face relationships, and strong norms, values, and beliefs (Durkheim, 1893/1964). The self was defined by a cosmic order, and the primary determinants of identity were normally fixed at birth. Toward the end of the Age of Enlightenment in Western Europe, a certain set of attitudes and ideas led to views of the world as something open to transformation by human intervention. The social conditions became deluged with a complex of economic institutions including industrial production, capitalism and a market economy, political institutions such as the nation-state and mass democracy, and dominant ideologies of individualism (Baumeister, 1997; Taylor, 1989). The depth of these macro-social transformations, especially evident during the growth of rationalization and secularization, began to affect populations as well as the social structures in which those populations were originally embedded (Berger et al., 1974; Howard, 2000). Though not all cultures were impacted by modernization in exactly the same ways, modern institutions were among some of the most dynamic agents of change in human history (Giddens, 1991).

Modernity, as presented here, constitutes a series of institutional processes that weakened the stable and cohesive collectivities in which individuals once found meaningful belonging (Berger et al., 1974). As such individuals adjusted to life in modern society, and started to grow increasingly displeased with traditional value bases (e.g., Christianity; Baumeister, 1997), Durkheim (1893/1964) establishes that a shared belief was forming around a new secular morality: a “cult of the individual”. Fascination with ideas that an individual could be both different and unique subsequently led to a high value being placed on freedom and autonomy (Berger, 1977). In sketching the philosophical history of individualism, Burkitt (2008) gathers that uniqueness, or individuality, was linked to long-standing considerations of the self as “located inside the individual, either in thought or in inner nature” (p. 10). This notion of an inner self—locked away and isolated from interaction with others—has been immensely pervasive in Western culture (Burkitt, 2008; Cohen, 2010b). It has prompted individuals to separate the domains of public and private life, thereby constituting the dialectic between social and subjective lifeworlds (Berger et al., 1974). What this dialectic implies is that our sense of self was to be recognized as distinct from society, and constructed only by looking deep inside the private spheres of mind and body. It was also understood that, upon engaging this privatized sphere of the self, a true or authentic self could be revealed (Burkitt, 2008).

Cohen (2010b) notes that, during the modern era, individuals were made to feel as if the potential of their “true inner self” (p. 118) deserved to be actualized. Hence, it is from this perspective that humanistic psychologists, such as Maslow (1970), underscored the need to improve the self over the course of a lifetime (viz., to achieve the human goal of self-actualization). This historically constructed belief in an actualisable inner self, however, has not been met with universal acceptance (Cohen, 2010b). For American philosophers like James and Mead, it was society, and not an inner essence, that made our own sense of self possible (Burkitt, 2008). In a more general sense, the pragmatist school of thought, to which James and Mead both subscribed, set out to deconstruct interpretations of the self as a phenomenon that can transcend the social. Though still prevalent, and often debated, in modern discourse (Baumeister, 1997), the inner nature of self has, to some extent, been exchanged for a self that is relational. To extend this theory

of the self, Goffman (1959) adopts theatrical terminology with the intention of portraying individuals as actors who perform their roles on a series of stages. These performances, or presentations, of the self draw attention to the importance of acknowledging that individuals have several social selves (Cohen, 2010b). Burkitt (2008) explains his rationale for accepting such a notion:

...I speak of social *selves*, in the plural rather than the singular, for we are all individual selves who necessarily relate to each other: there are many different selves in a society of individuals....[and thus], as individuals, we are multiple... (p. 3, italics in original)

Before proceeding any further, it may be worth noting that this discussion represents a Western understanding of self and identity. The Western lens, in contrast to understandings that may be labelled as non-Western, seems well suited for our discussion since it is within this culture that concerns of self and identity have been more openly expressed (Baumeister, 1997). When modern individuals' preoccupations with self and identity emerge, their existential dilemmas are inclined to provoke a form of "identity crisis" (Erikson, 1956, p. 69). It is mentioned by Burkitt (2008) that, to Enlightenment thinkers like Kant, these crises or dilemmas would have been managed by detaching the self and the individual from society. In contemporary Western culture, the search for self and identity involves finding answers, however partial or transient, "in relations with others and in activities undertaken with others" (Burkitt, 2008, p. 4). Yet, it is arguable that, owing to the changes taking place in late modern society, questions of identity are being asked more frequently, and, as a result, have become much more difficult to answer (Burkitt, 2008; Giddens, 1991). In a time when the self is perceived as multiple and fluid, McAdams (2001) warns that maintaining unity and coherence of self and identity can be highly problematic.

Over the last forty years or so, a new and different set of transformations has guided the social condition into a state of reconstitution. An assortment of terms and descriptors is used by social theorists to represent these transformations, for instance: post-industrial society, inter- and transnational economies, consumer society, global technologies and communications, and mass media society. In conjunction with such change is the development of poststructural critiques on foundationalism. An anti-

foundational position on the “essentialist” (i.e., inner) self is taken by Foucault (1980), who understands selves as socially and linguistically constructed. Underpinning this Foucauldian intervention is the idea that selves engage in dialogue with the manifold discourses circulating in society. Hall (1996) expands this argument by asserting that identities are temporary points of attachment “constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions” (p. 4). The combined insight of Foucault and Hall on “discourse determinism” (Wearing & Wearing, 2001, p. 147), though disinterested in the self as an embodied agent, has worked to address the social positioning power of discourse (Cohen, 2010b).

New socializing technologies in the postmodern era (e.g., telecommunications, Internet, television, and air travel) affect individuals in such a manner that they are confronted with a great diversity of lifestyle and identity choices (Giddens, 1991). According to Gergen (1991), this state of “social saturation” (p. 3) fundamentally alters the nature of interactions and the formation of relationships. It overpopulates the self with an excess of options that can be transitory, fragmentary, and unstable (Cohen, 2010b; Gergen, 1991). Consequently, our sense of self is increasingly “multiphrenic” (Gergen, 1991, p. 49; viz., continually changing over time and in different social contexts), with both unity and coherence dissolving in the flux of social fragmentation (Burkitt, 2008). Under these conditions, declares Burkitt (2008), “people can no longer take for granted that they *have* an identity, one that is given by the social circumstances of family, community, or social class” (p. 165, italics in original). Despite a fracturing of the self, Gergen (1991) finds there to be potential for individuals to “inscribe, erase, and rewrite their identities as the ever-changing, ever-expanding, and incoherent network of relationships invites or permits” (p. 228). It is the task of the individual, therefore, to draw on the self as an “anchoring” or sense-making device (Kuentzel, 2000). This metaphor of an anchor is reflective of the paradox of contemporary identities, “which must be solid enough to be acknowledged as such and yet flexible enough not to bar freedom of future movements in the constantly changing, volatile circumstances [of liquid modernity]” (Bauman, 2000, p. 49-50). In this account, Bauman (2000) demonstrates that, notwithstanding social saturation, individuals can maintain something of themselves which is relatively stable and unchanging. Put differently, in spite of the

social changes which navigate individuals away from coherence, “there still have to be...some stable elements that we, and others, can recognize with some degree of consistency as a self” (Burkitt, 2008, p. 191). Sustaining this coherence amidst the actualities of living in a postmodern social world is, of course, no simple undertaking.

It appears that, in the advent of postmodernity, self and identity have become much more difficult to maintain than in previous historical epochs. They can no longer be framed as things that individuals enduringly *possess*; rather, self and identity are more adequately understood in terms of an enduring *process*. On the basis of this principle, there is little choice but to construct, perform, and maintain them as part of an ongoing “project” (Giddens, 1991). Even so, such a project should not “assume an extreme plasticity of the self that dissolves any real conception that there exists an ongoing core” (Bendle, 2002, p. 12). This “core” to which Bendle (2002) speaks—which is not to be mistaken for an inner self (Cohen, 2010b)—ensures that, even in a fluid and flexible society, individuals can nevertheless (re)construct a stable or coherent sense of self and identity:

...a core self...is never entirely sure of itself, never completed, always in the process of some degree of change, and open to the possibility—perhaps the inevitability—of reconstruction. Yet to say that the self is unstable, as many contemporary writers and thinkers do, is a misconception, because instability suggests something always on the verge of a collapse. Perhaps the key term in all of this is the one used by Mead, which is *reconstruction*; (Burkitt, 2008, p. 190, italics in original)

**Self, identity, and narratives.** There are a notable number of theorists (e.g., Cohler, 1982; Giddens, 1991; Kerby, 1991; McAdams, 1996; Sarbin, 1986) who expanded upon MacIntyre’s (1981) philosophy on the “narrative unity of human life”, or life as lived through a narrative configuration. It is at the level of the individual that reflexivity of the self portrays humans as narrative beings, or self-narrating organisms (Kerby, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981). To revisit the relationship between the I and the Me once more, Sarbin (1986) refers to the I as the author of a process that subjectively receives responses from others and constructs stories of the Me. The stories of the Me are the result of ongoing changes occurring in this I-ing process, and so the Me comes to represent the protagonist of stories one tells oneself, and others, about oneself. This



reflexive dialogue between the I and the Me is the collaborative process behind the self as a narrative construction (Sarbin, 1986). A self-narrative then is the intersubjective development of stories that, as Cohler (1982) argues, signifies an internalized interpretation of a presently understood and reconstructed past, an experienced present, and an anticipated future configured into an intelligible order and a coherent whole.

While the I maintains a sense of similarity, the Me carries a sense of difference. It is this sense of possessing multiple selves and identities that causes temporal continuity to be particularly challenging in modern society (Baumeister, 1997). The diffusion of the individual in this regard signifies an involvement in multiple identity-forming self-narratives. Giddens' (1991) "reflexive project of the self" addresses the quest for temporal continuity in self and identity through the construction of first-person biographical narratives. Given that the individual (re)constructs the self in everyday life, and over the course of a lifetime, narratives require a reconstructing of events of the remembered past as well as continuous revision in the present and in light of what is anticipated for an organized future. The project is a form of life-planning devoid of charting a life course from beginning to end. Instead the trajectory of the project is directed at self-development and self-actualization, thereby employed to make choices and decisions regarding future possible lifestyles and identities. Furthermore, this project proposes to contend against threats of existential doubt and personal meaninglessness, and seeks to seize the opportunities of ontological security and a meaningful life (Giddens, 1991).

McAdams' (1996, 2001) life story model, though sharing similarities with Giddens' reflexive project, is an adaptation of dramaturgical and literary concepts in conjunction with major themes in psychology. He establishes that finding coherence and continuity in self and identity is a cultural expectation that, for many modern men and women, begins in late adolescence and early adulthood (see Erikson, 1956). The structure of his model is opposed to being a single, large, and unproblematic narrative that provides individual lives with absolute coherence and continuity. The aim is, rather, to be inclusive of a multiplicity of ever-changing selves and identities that are integrated synchronically and diachronically into a broadly framed, continuously evolving, and individually unique life story (McAdams, 1996, 2001). Throughout much of his research,

McAdams remains cognisant of postmodern scepticism and indifference (e.g., Gergen, 1991), especially of the nature by which its claims to dissolution, flexibility, and indeterminacy negate the function of an integrative meta-narrative as a means to finding coherence and continuity in life. Nonetheless, postmodern approaches to self and identity retain a steadfast belief in the importance of narratives (McAdams, 2001).

Self-narratives, as a reflexive project or a life story, are shaped by “webs of relationality” (Somers, 1994, p. 618) and nestled within external or public narratives (Gergen & Gergen, 1983; Somers, 1994). The latter narratives contribute substantially to a positioning of the self-narrator or life storyteller. From a cultural standpoint, external narratives are constructed and told within paradigms of intelligibility specific to a culture. They are subject to the sociocultural norms, values, rules, conventions, and traditions that prevail in the given time and space. The content and meanings of such narratives cannot be separated from inherited narratives of the past, culturally available narrative genres or structures, and the particular language in use (Kerby, 1991; McAdams, 2001). The extent to which the content and meanings of narratives are sustained across time and space depend upon the people who are afforded, or constrained by, the opportunity to selectively choose and interpret the appropriate and meaningful aspects of their life both for themselves and others. In many ways, narratives are accepted or rejected in accordance with divisions of race, gender, and class, and patterns of economic, political, and cultural hegemony (McAdams, 1996, 2001).

From a historical standpoint, external narratives lay the foundation for the self-narrator or life storyteller and members of a group to (re)construct individual identity and collective identities. To utilize the words of Hall (1990), identities are “the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (p. 225). Hall (1990) intends to suggest that humans are “historically emerging being[s]” (Gergen & Gergen, 1983, p. 255), a notion which is elaborated upon by Kerby (1991):

Indeed, much of our self-narrating is a matter of becoming conscious of the narratives that we already live with and in....It seems true to say that we have already been narrated from a third-person perspective prior to our even gaining the competence for self-narration. Such external narratives will understandably set up expectations and constraints on our personal self-

descriptions, and they significantly contribute to the material from which our own narratives are derived. (p. 6)

Narratives of the past, which are generally constructed and told orally by others, have a substantial influence on the positioning of individual identity and collective identities. If the narratives encompass a migratory movement away from a location of origin, their spatial-temporal organization changes markedly. Not only do self and identity adopt the historical narrative of a new territorial space, but self and identity may remain spatially-temporally extended to, as well as disconnected from, the historical narrative of a territory of origin. Even though that specific time and space may only survive in memory, myth, or nostalgia, it is the transfer of those memories, myths, and nostalgic thoughts into narratives that can be meaningful for generations of family who after some time become preoccupied with questions of their identity, home, and belonging.

### **Tourism of the Diaspora: A Preamble**

The second section of this chapter aims to review the literature on roots-seeking and genealogy-tracing tourism for the purpose of contextualizing theories of self and identity. A preamble to this review is necessary because contributions to the interplay of tourism, migration, diaspora, and identity (Coles & Timothy, 2004a) have been seminal in the development of a conceptual framework for these two tourism niches. To extract from various writings on this subject, a diaspora is a population scattered across different nation states that commonly identifies, as a nation or ethnic group, with a geographical location of origin. Privileging this “myth of a common origin” (Cohen, 1997, p. 184) in the construction of identity also means privileging essentialist myths of race, ethnicity, and culture. Primordality, the theme that underpins these myths, gives identities the opportunity to cross borders and boundaries of different nation states and form racial, ethnic, and cultural commonalities and solidarities at the transnational level (Anthias, 1998). The interstitial diasporic condition of being *from* one place and *of* another garners considerable attention from tourism scholars interested in consumption and experiences of tourism by diasporic communities (Anthias, 1998; Coles & Timothy, 2004b). Studies of return visits (Duval, 2003), ethnic reunions (Stephenson, 2002), visits to friends and

relatives (King, 1994), and return migrations (Feng & Page, 2000) all assist in bringing awareness to dualities in the notions of identity, home, and belonging. As both an offshoot and concomitant development of diaspora tourism theory, roots-seeking tourism takes these notions into a slightly different realm of conceptual thought by presenting travel as a *route* (viz., a counter-diasporic route) toward the *roots* of an original ancestral homeland (Clifford, 1997).

**Roots-seeking tourism: An antecedent to genealogy-tracing tourism.** Roots-seeking tourism is understood to be focused on the diasporic descendants who live in contemporary multicultural societies (Basu, 2007; Bruner, 1996; King, 1994; Timothy & Teye, 2004). The context of roots-seeking tourism is predominantly centred on, but not limited to, the New World or post-colonial settler societies of “no ancient claim” (Basu, 2004b, p. 39; e.g., Canada, USA, Australia, and New Zealand). Roots-seeking tourism was recently defined as travel to ancestral homelands for purposes such as “leisure, visiting family and relatives, discovering the culture of the ancestral society, and searching for one’s roots and identity without the intention of permanent settlement or work-related purposes” (Maruyama, Weber & Stronza, 2010, p. 1). Outside of those activities identified in the definition, the leisure interests of roots-seeking tourists generally include engagements with family history research, organized ancestral heritage tours, visits to personal heritage sites and popular heritage attractions, and attendance at special events, festivals, ceremonies, family gatherings, or reunions (Basu, 2007; Timothy, 2008).

Research articles by Cohen (1979) and King (1994) are arguably the first works by tourism scholars to approach the subject of travel motivated by the exploration of family histories and ancestral roots. Timothy’s (1997) conceptual contribution to the tourism literature helped to guide the concept of roots-seeking travel from scant scholarly acknowledgement to adequate scholarly interest. He alleges that millions of people worldwide travel both domestically and internationally to experience heritage at the personal level. Timothy (1997) understands the personal heritage experience, by way of the assertions of Lowenthal (1975), to be about connecting to a past that offers coherence and continuity in the modern age. Lowenthal (1975) observes how the assault of

modernity on heritage sites and historic relics nurtures people's sense of nostalgia for the past, and, in turn, causes there to be more of an appreciation for familial legacy and a desire to search for roots. In addition, this search for roots is a response to spatial displacements associated with the mobilities, migrations, and diasporas that have become prevalent in a global society (Lowenthal, 1998).

Studies of return visits to natal homelands by diasporic communities scattered all over the world (Coles & Timothy, 2004b; Duval, 2003; Stephenson, 2002) suggest that living in late modern multicultural societies leads to a problematization of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities (Basu, 2007; Tilley, 2006; Timothy & Teye, 2004). To suppress their ambiguity and doubt, some individuals in these societies may, during a "fateful moment" (Giddens, 1991, p. 112) of transition in their lives, turn to the opportunities of travel and the ontological moorings of a collective identity, time, and space (Basu, 2004b; Louie, 2001; Wang, 1999). Such individuals are identified as the descendants of first-generation diasporic migrants, or, in other words, they constitute second and succeeding generations. The relationship between these descendants, a past, and an ancestral homeland is understood to be different from that of the relationship between diasporic migrants, a past, and a homeland (Louie, 2001; Maruyama et al., 2010; Timothy, 2008).

Ancestral homeland orientations for generations succeeding diasporic migrants and living in a contemporary home(land) are very ambiguous. These generations are assumed not to be returning to a homeland from which they were born and emigrated, rather they are (re)visiting and returning to an ancestral homeland in a profoundly mythical sense (Basu, 2007). Diasporas are characterized by the existence of multiple homes and intersections of identity, memory, myth, nostalgia, and authenticity (Cohen, 1997). The influence of the diasporic condition on succeeding generations' orientations to the ancestral homeland has been examined almost exclusively in the context of counter-diasporic return migrations by the second-generation (Christou, 2006; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Wessendorf, 2007). Ancestral homeland orientations for roots-seeking tourists, assumingly prior to any travel, are marked by a desire to "hunt down" (Basu, 2001, p. 333) a homeland that, to their discontent, has been spatially and temporally disconnected from their lives. The ancestral homeland is a construction of these tourists' imagination (Basu, 2001), but not necessarily a fetishized homeland that is continually longed for

(Timothy, 2008). It is perceived through an imaginative reality (i.e., occupied by dreams, fantasies, images, and visions) as a mythic symbol of an emotionally powerful cultural heritage (Basu, 2001; Stephenson, 2002). When the ancestral homeland is ultimately experienced during travel, the imaginative reality unites with a material reality that is territorially fixed by its geographical (e.g., natural and built landscapes) and historical (e.g., sites of memory) specificities (Basu, 2001). The merging of these two realities yields accounts of life-changing experiences, spiritual evocations, emotional involvement, and strengthened bonds or ties (Basu, 2001, 2004a; Stephenson, 2002; Timothy & Teye, 2004).

Evidence from a number of studies on roots-seeking tourism (Basu, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Bruner, 1996; Stephenson, 2002; Timothy & Teye, 2004) demonstrates that this tourist experience is rife with expressions of spirituality and the sacred, in addition to metaphors of journeying, pilgrimage, and quest. By applying the motif of the Holy Grail to the “root metaphor” of quest, also used characteristically as a “route metaphor” by roots-seeking tourists in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Basu (2004a) claims that such tourists search inwardly and outwardly for “the source of their ‘authentic’, rooted identity” (p. 167), or a “collective or true self hiding inside the many other... ‘selves’ which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Hall, 1990, p. 223), as this is the primary source of a “deeper, more unified, more coherent and more enduring sense of self” (Basu, 2004a, p. 167). The quest is represented as a desire of the soul or spirit to want to search for “existential authenticity” (Wang, 1999, p. 352) in an elective centre by way of “existential touristic experiences” (Cohen, 1979, p. 190). Such a desire is understood to have intensified for those individuals who feel spatially displaced from the source of an authentic rooted identity (i.e., loss of spatial rootedness), socially and culturally isolated from a historical community (i.e., loss of social belonging), and temporally disconnected from the roots of their ancestral past (i.e., loss of historical continuity; Basu, 2007). Therefore, to travel as a diasporic descendant to an ancestral homeland, or to make a corporeal and “mythical homecoming” (p. 168) as Basu (2004a) prescribes, allows for the recovery of authentic ancestral roots, an authentic sense of belonging, and an authentic feeling of being “at home” (Berger et al., 1974, p. 82) in an ancestral homeland. This experience comes to facilitate a “re-root[ing]” (Basu, 2004b, p.

28) of ethnic identity for roots-seeking tourists in a rite of passage described as transformative and personally therapeutic (Basu, 2004a).

Research on roots-seeking tourism has largely been concerned with diasporic descendants' sense of identity and belonging. This research is premised on the "increasingly problematized sense of belonging" (Basu, 2005, p. 134) in post-colonial settler societies that affects some, but not all, descendants. The nature of this problem is more complex than simply belonging or unbelonging. The recovery of a sense of belonging to an ancestral homeland is entangled with the recovery of a sense of belonging to a collective identity. Basu (2004a) finds the necessity by roots-seeking tourists to relocate self and identity both spatially and temporally in the Scottish homeland to be vividly expressed in a simultaneous need to affirm a "genealogical rhetoric" (p. 162) of blood and territorial attachment. Although the tourists from his studies live by an imagined primordial myth that their ethnic Scottish identity was collectively ascribed through biological or genetic connections, non-essentialist positions upheld by cultural theorists like Hall (1990) challenge such ethnic essentialism. By underscoring the heterogeneity, diversity, and hybridity of "new ethnicities" (Hall, 1988), it is possible to gather that two types of identity typify this idea of new ethnicities: (a) hyphenated identity (e.g., French-American), and (b) hybrid identity (e.g., German-Hungarian-Croatian; Isajiw, 1992). According to Timothy (2008), individuals in contemporary multicultural societies possess so many mixed ethnicities and lineages that essentialist identities are becoming almost irrelevant.

A sense of belonging to place and land is quite different from a sense of belonging to people and culture. Visiting an ancestral homeland as a roots-seeking tourist involves several encounters with locals who may share the same racial, ethnic, cultural, and ancestral backgrounds. Bruner (1996) and Stephenson (2002) postulate that social marginalization, disempowerment, and alienation among racial and ethnic minorities may influence such groups to search for a sense of identity and belonging in an ancestral homeland. As a result of their position as a "halfway population" (Hollinshead, 1998, p. 71), or as a community of "in-betweenness" (Coles & Timothy, 2004b), roots-seeking tourists also experience marginalization in the homeland due to perceptions of cultural deficiency and observable differences in physical appearance, class, nationality, and

citizenship (Kibria, 2002; Louie, 2001; Maruyama et al., 2010; Stephenson, 2002).

Roots-seeking tourism therefore occurs within a context of social interactions from which tourists need to reconstruct their identities and renegotiate their sense of belonging. While roots-seeking tourists may endeavour to be at home, search for collective identities, and recover a sense of belonging, there are a number of factors that function both personally and socially to problematize their sense of identity, home, and belonging. Evidently, though, not all roots-seeking tourists are alike, and not all experiences of roots-seeking tourism are identical for every racial, ethnic, and cultural group.

### **Genealogy and Family History Research**

Genealogy, or genealogical research, is in essence the personal pursuit of tracing ancestral lineages through the collective memories of family and friends, historical records and archival data, or a combination of all possible available resources and data (Nash, 2002). It is a way of documenting the history of a family that has no previously documented history, and a way of seeking connections with a past that has not been previously sought (Saar, 2002). From the time when Mormons of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) instituted infrastructure for genealogical research in the late 1800s, the practice of genealogy has incrementally grown in North America as a specialized pursuit carried out for general interest, curiosity, and personal enrichment (Fowler, 2003; Lambert, 1996). Its path of development is evident via the ways in which genealogy has become formalized, professionalized, and a “central life interest” (Dubin, 1979, p. 406) for many enthusiasts.

A prevalent argument concerning the noticeable upsurge in supply and demand for genealogy over the past fifty years, much like the search for roots, is the shifting conditions of (post)modern society and specific happenings in the sociohistorical context of 20<sup>th</sup> century North America, including the ethnic revival of the 1970s, a loss of oral transmission of family history between adults and youth, and the renowned book and television series *Roots* by Alex Haley (Hackstaff, 2009; C. K. Jacobson, 1986; M. F. Jacobson, 2006; Santos & Yan, 2010). Although the practice of genealogy and the conservation of historical material have been common features of many societies and cultures (Erben, 1991), rapid developments in technology and information collection,



storage, dissemination, and digitization have significantly changed the nature of how genealogy is conducted both across time and space. It is very much “electronically driven” (Birtwistle, 2005, p. 63), as evidenced by its popularity on the Internet and numerous computer software programs (Meethan, 2004, 2008). And, with the global diffusion of technologies and communication mediums such as emailing, online forums, and social networking, genealogists now have better opportunities to reciprocally share, transcribe, and exchange information with other genealogists, professional bodies or organizations, and the broader archival community (Fulton, 2009; Meethan, 2004, 2008; Nash, 2002).

As independent amateurs, genealogists conduct unscholarly research by travelling domestically, internationally, or virtually to public libraries, genealogical centres, record offices, archival institutions, museums, cemeteries, churches or places of worship, family reunions, online databases and forums, genealogical society meetings, and conferences. Their endeavours consist of interacting recurrently with librarians and archivists, holding memberships in formal genealogical societies and informal genealogical groups, and forming social networks and relationships with other amateur genealogists in order to assist and support their needs to acquire, analyze, compile, and organize information (Duff & Johnson, 2003; Yakel, 2004; Yakel & Torres, 2007). Amateur genealogists, in using themselves as the point of departure, generally work backwards and with partiality toward patrilineal lines of descent, the use of an exclusionary discretion, and tendencies for ethnocentrism (Erben, 1991; Lambert, 1996; Nash, 2002). Through searches for factual data such as names, surnames, places and dates of birth, marriage, and death, they aim to be strategic in their approach to locate individuals that make up the complex networks of kinship and affiliation (Nash, 2002). These pieces of information are typically the “building material[s]” (Lambert, 1996, p. 123) that amateur genealogists use to evaluate and validate placement on the lineage chart, and conceivably the tools necessary with which to expand into the confines of family history research (Yakel, 2004).

Family history research is considered to be a complement to, and extension of, genealogy that centres on the interchange between documentary sources of historical information and the (re)construction of biographical narratives of family, kin, and

ancestors. By supplementing or triangulating records and archival data, family stories, personal memories, and private family memorabilia with searches for oral testimonies, living relatives, artefacts, maps, and local histories, family history researchers look not only to situate their ancestors within a broad narrative of the past but also to position information into a coherent family history narrative and a narrative of the self (Meethan, 2004, 2008; Yakel & Torres, 2007). In doing so, family history researchers are “memory workers” (Lambert, 2002, p. 124) and “seekers of meaning as much as they are searchers for records. As seekers of meaning, they are less invested in proving the truth of stories and records, but more [invested] in uncovering coherent narratives” (Yakel & Torres, 2007, p. 111). This investment is congruent with a desire to search for affirmation as individuals with both a unique individual identity and an undifferentiated collective identity (Erben, 1991; Nash, 2002).

It is to the credit of a few sociologists (e.g., Erben, 1991; Jacobson, 1986; Lambert, 1996) who, in continuing the scholarly investigations of their predecessors, underscored the importance of identity in genealogy and family history research. Hackstaff (2010) conjectures that amateur genealogists may be more diverse in their collective identities (e.g., ethnic and racial identities) than perhaps ever before, and with that comes a desire to utilize their practices as a resource for self and identity construction. Kramer (2011) echoes this point, stating that “genealogy plays a central role in identity-projects and the forging of individuality within a collective context” (p. 382). A study by Nash (2002) establishes that genealogy and family history research can produce a sense of individual and collective identity which, contrary to widespread beliefs, may never be fully concluded or realized. With current trends toward the use of genetics in genealogy, it may be that there is greater potential for family history research to unsettle previously taken for granted assumptions about identity—thus giving way to a realization that “achieving a settled answer to identity always eludes conclusion” (Nash, 2002, p. 49). Nevertheless identities, both individual and collective, remain in need of more acknowledgment and theoretical investigation in a genealogy and family history context (Nash, 2002; Timothy & Guelke, 2008).

### **Genealogy-tracing tourism: A promising subject for leisure studies research.**

Along with roots-seeking tourism, genealogy-tracing tourism is also understood to be focused on the diasporic descendants who live in late modern multicultural societies. It has been presented as a rapidly growing form of domestic travel in the United States (Santos & Yan, 2010), and international travel to England (Fowler, 2003), Ireland (Nash, 2002) Scotland (Basu, 2007; Birtwistle, 2005), and Central Europe (Timothy, 2008). Genealogy represents that of a unique leisure engagement which is demanded by contemporary tourists who trace ancestral lineages and search for information on family histories. The genealogy-tracing tourist is viewed by Basu (2007) as no different from a roots-seeking tourist; yet, the former is not one who necessarily travels to an ancestral homeland, which is almost always the case with the latter. After exhausting most resources online and in the home environment, travelling domestically and internationally typically becomes the next course of action for the genealogy-tracing tourist (Meethan, 2004; Santos & Yan, 2010; Timothy, 2008).

Only in more recent years have tourism scholars (see McCain & Ray, 2003) shown interest in further expanding previous research on the meanings and motivations of pursuing genealogy and family history research from the disciplines of sociology and geography. A study by Santos and Yan (2010) explores the meanings genealogy-tracing tourists attributed to their lived experiences at the Historical Genealogy Department of the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The findings from their interviews and observations are divided into three themes: (a) a personalized and contextualized understanding of one's family, (b) devotion, detail, and purpose, and (c) contributing to legacy. The tourists desired to develop their brief and abstract understandings of family history by personalizing and contextualizing them within a larger, concrete, and demystified sociohistorical context. With the tourist experience focused on information collecting and storytelling, the tourists devoted themselves to being detailed and purposeful in their engagements of genealogy, without allowing other leisure activities to take precedence. This devotion means that by having the ability to affirm their family's identity, genealogy-tracing tourists can build a material legacy for relatives in the present and generations in the future (Santos & Yan, 2010). The recipients of this legacy are, in effect, presumed to be "hit, affected and concerned by the historical

account...provoked and shocked, struck by the lightning of instantaneous insight into what they are, how they have become and what they might not want to be” (Saar, 2002, p. 240).

The three main themes of Santos and Yan’s (2010) study are comparable, in some respects, to the four important reasons for pursuing genealogy and family history research reported by Lambert (1996): (a) learning about one’s roots and identity, (b) getting to know ancestors as people, (c) posterity, and (d) restoring forgotten ancestors in the family’s memory. Despite the differences in disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological approach, this pair of studies shows that amateur genealogists and genealogy-tracing tourists are not homogeneous. Together, they also expose some of the lesser-known reasons for pursuing genealogy and family history research, which include locating distant living relatives, finding prominent (viz., aristocratic, noble, gentry or royal) ancestors, solving puzzles, collecting purposes, religious motivations, disease disposition, familial obligations, and building on earlier research started by other family members (Lambert, 1996; Santos & Yan, 2010). Besides this general consideration, there are no additional studies on genealogy-tracing tourism that can be employed here to enrich our understandings of this tourism niche. Regardless of the limited extent to which tourism scholars have investigated the phenomena of genealogy and family history research, their contributions still play an indispensable role in developing the multidisciplinary literature on this subject. Given the long-standing belief that tourism shares an organic relationship with leisure, greater efforts are needed to facilitate intersections between genealogy-tracing tourism and contemporary theories in leisure studies, such as the serious leisure perspective (SLP). To transcend the divide, or disconnect, that presently exists between tourism and leisure—in order to foment such intersections—an examination of their relationship seems necessary.

### **Leisure and Tourism: Points of Convergence**

Tourism is an evolutionary development in the modern use of leisure (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Current theorizing depicts leisure as a state of mind, an activity, and a phenomenon that continues to elude conceptual definition (Searle & Brayley, 2000). Tourism, in a similar sense, has also proven to be a difficult term to pin down

conceptually (Moore et al., 1995). As an expression, or “special form” (Moore et al., 1995, p. 67), of leisure, tourism consumes leisure time (Krippendorf, 1987). Leisure time is not necessarily a disposable or residual time. It may be described as a framework of time in which an experience is subjectively perceived as leisure and chosen primarily for its “own sake” (Kelly, 1983, p. 15). In other words, it is a time of relative freedom and disengagement from the unpleasant obligations that structure everyday life (Stebbins, 2007). The temporal dimension of leisure suggests, in a rather ambiguous sense, that time is discretionary and conditional to the everyday needs and responsibilities of life. On account of this dimension, tourism is also performed in relatively discretionary, as well as transitory, terms (Smith & Godbey, 1991).

Tourism lends itself to a leisure state of mind (Singh, 2005). This theory of leisure as a state of mind is a product of 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking. It is preceded by the ancient Greek philosophy of leisure as a state of being. Aristotle postulated that leisure represents a philosophical ideal which is to be achieved in contemplation and scholarship. In their liberation from the necessity of work, such privileged philosophers, including Aristotle, took pleasure in their entitlement to a life of *scholé* (Searle & Brayley, 2000). An emergent social psychology of leisure, guided by scholars like Iso-Ahola and Mannell, formulated and legitimated the conceptualization of leisure as a state of mind. While this approach retains the ancient Greek philosophy of leisure as a subjective experience, it conceives of the interaction between individual and environment as the process that determines a subjective perception of leisure (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Searle & Brayley, 2000).

The spatial dimension of leisure is often regarded as markedly different from tourism (Carr, 2002; Leiper, 1990). Leisure experiences are steeped in a notion of the everyday, while tourism is considered to encompass infrequent leisure episodes that occur in places outside of the everyday environment (viz., beyond the home or near-home environment; Leiper, 1990; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987). It is revealed by Larsen (2008) that certain foundational works in tourism studies (e.g., Urry, 1990) have produced the following:

...fixed dualisms between the life of tourism and everyday life: extraordinary and ordinary, pleasure and boredom, liminality and rule, exotic others and

significant others, to mention some. Such ‘purification’ means that everyday life and tourism end up belonging to different ontological worlds, the worlds of the mundane and the exotic, respectively. (p. 21-22)

In bridging this dualism between the concepts of leisure and tourism, Crouch (2000) argues that, “when individuals are ‘doing’ leisure and tourism” (p. 64), they encounter people and places in related ways. Thus, it no longer makes sense to perpetuate divisions of leisure and tourism, especially in ways that bestow upon tourism a privileged or “special” status (Moore et al., 1995).

Beyond views of the spatial, Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) claim that leisure and tourism share common behavioural and psychological characteristics, such as intrinsic motivation, freedom, escape, and flow. This observation is supported by Moore et al. (1995) in their behavioural conceptualization of the leisure and tourism studies fields. In validating the relationship between leisure and tourism behaviours, Carr (2002) presents a leisure-tourism continuum. On one end of the continuum, leisure behaviour is shaped by the residual culture of the home environment; on the opposite end of the continuum, tourist behaviour is influenced by the tourist culture of the holiday environment. In the middle of these two extremes, behaviours are affected by both residual and tourist cultures to varying degrees (Carr, 2002). In the last few years, a small, but growing, number of leisure and tourism scholars (e.g., Brey & Lehto, 2007; Green & Jones, 2005) have worked to establish new understandings and relationships. For example, Chang and Gibson (2011) confirm that there is a strong connection between physically active leisure and participation in the same or similar physical activities while on vacation. Yet, in spite of such novel and insightful observations, it is still not entirely discernible when, and how, leisure and tourism experiences converge (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987).

### **Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP)**

Stebbins coined serious leisure in 1982 as a term for “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 5). Serious leisure evolved from its early beginnings as a product of

extensive exploratory research to represent that of a formal grounded theory. The basic framework of serious leisure is a systematic categorization of three forms of leisure: serious, casual, and project-based. Casual leisure is acknowledged for its short duration, immediate pleasures and intrinsic rewards, and lack of specialized training. Project-based leisure is a recent addition to the SLP, and it refers to an infrequently occasional and reasonably complicated creative undertaking. Although the framework takes its name from the first of these forms of leisure, serious leisure is not to be recognized as the most important of the three (Stebbins, 2007).

The six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure include: (a) perseverance, (b) pursuance of a leisure career, (c) significant personal effort based on special skills, knowledge, training, and experience, (d) durable benefits to the individual, (e) a unique ethos, and (f) a strong identification with the chosen activity. Perseverance involves the negotiation of constraints and overcoming the adversarial factors that manifest with a core activity. To pursue a long-term leisure career is to progress through an activity in a series of turning points, contingencies, and stages of achievement or involvement. A significant personal effort is demonstrated through the acquisition and expression of special skills, knowledge, training, and experience associated with an activity. The outcomes of participation in an activity include a range of eight durable benefits: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, feelings of accomplishment, regeneration or renewal of the self, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity. A unique ethos exists within an activity and consists of shared attitudes, practices, values, beliefs, and goals. The formed collectivity represents a social world, defined by Unruh (1979) as “a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous in character. Generally larger than groups or organizations, social worlds are not necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership lists, or spatial territory” (p. 115). The social world of serious leisure comprises of such a unique social organization that the activity evolves into its own definable subculture. Finally, as a related quality, participants of serious leisure tend to identify strongly with their chosen activity (Stebbins, 1992, 2007).

**Amateurism and hobbyist pursuits.** Of the three types of serious leisure, there is amateurism, hobbyist pursuits, and career volunteering. Amateurism refers to art, science, sport, or entertainment-related activities expressed in a regimented and systematic manner. Amateurs operate, and are strongly aware of their counterparts, in a professional domain. Professionals and amateurs, together with the public whom the two groups share, factor into a three-way professional-amateur-public or PAP system. In effect, the social structure of amateurism places amateurs in a margin between the general public and the professional. Within this system of interactions, there can be monetary, organizational, and intellectual relationships among the three. Lastly, amateurs almost always serve a public, although it may well be the same public served by professionals (Stebbins, 1992, 2007).

A hobby is a “specialized pursuit beyond one’s occupation, a pursuit that one finds particularly interesting and enjoyable because of its durable benefits” (Stebbins, 1992, p. 10). Like amateurs, hobbyists are serious and committed to their endeavours. Unlike amateurs however, hobbyists have no professional equivalent and do not experience a social necessity or personal obligation to engage in the hobby. Hobbyists fall into five categories: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants (in non-competitive, rule-based pursuits), players of sports and games (in non-competitive, rule-based activities with no professional counterparts), and enthusiasts of the liberal arts. Several of these hobbies can fit into more than one category, and even evolve, as many already have, into amateurism and professions (Stebbins, 1992, 2007).

**Serious leisure and genealogy.** As mentioned briefly in the introduction to this research study, there are two competing classifications for genealogy within the SLP. By way of his non-systematic observations of leisure in everyday life, Stebbins (2005) classifies genealogy as a liberal arts pursuit of project-based leisure. Enthusiasts of liberal arts pursuits are fascinated with the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. Upon acquisition of this knowledge, its practical applications are conjectured to be a secondary consideration (Stebbins, 2007). The case for genealogy as project-based leisure, as observed by Stebbins (2005), may not be the only possible way to conceive of genealogy. Alternatively, Fulton (2009) classifies genealogy as serious leisure. In the absence of



rationalizing her choice, she further reduces genealogy to a hobbyist pursuit. There are an abundant number of genealogists who engage in genealogy as a hobbyist pursuit. That is to say, they pursue genealogy for collecting purposes, to solve puzzles, and as the makers of a physical product (e.g., family trees, family history book, scrapbook or website; Jacobson, 1986; Lambert, 1996; Santos & Yan, 2010). Yet, genealogy may also be suited to amateurism. In a semantic sense, the word genealogy takes on a different meaning when it is communicated, as is often the case in the multidisciplinary literature on genealogy, as either of the amateur or professional variety. With the professionalization of the practice of genealogy (Nash, 2002), it can only be assumed that amateur genealogists are aware of their professional counterparts in this domain. In theory, if amateur genealogists have very little to no idea of their professional counterparts, then the leisure side of the activity remains at a hobbyist level (Stebbins, 2007).

### **Summary**

As stated in the introduction to this research study, tourism scholars—mainly those working in the area of heritage tourism—have discussed the subject of genealogy without giving much consideration to its theoretical underpinnings. The first section of this chapter establishes a conceptual foundation by reviewing the process of self and identity formation, and by sketching the conceptual development of self and identity in modern and postmodern theory. Given the importance of the role that narratives play in ongoing constructions of self and identity, acknowledgement is given to the interplay between self, identity, and narratives. The second section of this chapter examines research on roots-seeking tourism, as such research provides an adequate base for understanding genealogy-tracing tourism. Lastly, relationships between leisure and tourism are discussed, after which the SLP is outlined with respect to amateurism, hobbyist pursuits, and recent studies suggesting classifications of genealogy.

Throughout the remainder of this text, the purpose and research question of the study are to be continuously repeated. This practice is aimed at ensuring readers and audiences do not lose sight of the fundamental elements that comprise all research studies. Once again, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure

engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity. The research question is: how do amateur genealogists—who embark on a quest for personal identity—convey their understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self? To be able to respond to this question, both an appropriate methodology and method are required. Accordingly, it is to these two aspects that our attention now turns.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Method

### **Introduction**

With the purpose of this research study centred on investigating the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity, it is important to choose a methodology and employ a method that appropriately suit this purpose. Glover (2003) and Rickly-Boyd (2009) note that emerging fields of study, such as leisure and tourism, typically utilize methods developed in traditional or parent disciplines as a way to understand the complexities of the phenomenon under study. One of their main methodological implications, and one that corresponded with the needs of this research study, is the utilization of narrative inquiry. Narrative is a rich method of inquiry that has been widely embraced by researchers from several different academic communities. While it is mostly underutilized in studies of leisure and tourism, it ought to be acknowledged as an approach that can help to strengthen research in both fields (Glover, 2003; Rickly-Boyd, 2009).

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is congruent with the purpose of this study. It represents a legitimate mode of human and social science investigation (Creswell, 2007). Over the past 25 years, the increasing use and refinement of interpretivist qualitative research have helped to liberate it from a label as a poor alternative to positivist quantitative research. It endured periods of resistance in which it was charged outright with being irrelevant due to misconceptions regarding objectivity and generalizability. Nonetheless, the status of qualitative research has risen above such charges to achieve significance and legitimacy. Qualitative research operates as an approach to social inquiry that critiques and remedies alleged deficiencies of the natural science methods which underpin quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

Qualitative research is a distinct set of methods that investigates, interprets, and understands “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). A traditional strategy in qualitative research is to study subjects

in their natural settings. Places of comfort, familiarity, and without the forces of control or manipulation are ideal for both the researcher and participant. This type of environment allows the discovery-oriented nature of qualitative research to come forward (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher is to have direct contact with individuals in their own environments in order to understand their subjective realities and gain an emic perspective. Such active involvement should not imply that qualitative researchers aim to prove a theory, support predetermined results, serve their vested interests, or distort findings in a covertly biased fashion. An emergent or flexible design, whether partial or full in degree, is a strategic principle for evading untrustworthiness and ensuring that the research develops or unfolds naturalistically (Patton, 2002). Otherwise stated, the process of conducting qualitative research should not be tightly prescribed and disallow for the possibility of change upon entrance into a setting (Creswell, 2007). In this sense, qualitative researchers are bricoleurs, or individuals adept at performing a large number of tasks, remaining flexible, and utilizing various methods, materials, strategies, and practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Qualitative research is informed by a variety of philosophical and theoretical traditions. For this reason, there is no singular approach with which to conduct qualitative research (Patton, 2002). All approaches to contemporary social science are based on an interrelated set of assumptions between ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology is the study of the nature of human existence, and the structure of reality as such. Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowing, the construction of knowledge, and the relationship between a researcher and an understanding of what constitutes knowing. Methodology is the use of specific methods through which knowledge about the social world is obtained (Crotty, 1998). These three elements are derived from philosophical positions that, within qualitative research, reflect competing or conflicting ideas about the social world and social reality (Creswell, 2007). Altogether the three may be termed a paradigm, or a set of basic beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), which comprise the philosophical worldview of the researcher and guide that individual in making sense of the complexities of the social world (Patton, 2002). Thus, it is essential to specify a paradigm or the paradigmatic assumptions on which this study is based.

### **Philosophical Assumptions of the Study**

This research study is committed to an interpretive paradigm of a relativist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology. A relativist ontology assumes that realities “are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110-111). Individuals possess a subjective or internally experienced sense of reality, and this reality is locally and intersubjectively (re)constructed from meanings and understandings developed through social interactions. To be clear, different realities are constructed by different people as they interact in social environments (Crotty, 1998). With reference to narrative inquiry, such inquirers negate social reality as accessed in ways that are independent of their interests, purposes, and languages. Social reality is not external to the inquirer, objectively conceived, and awaiting discovery. An important implication of this ontology is that individuals construct multiple truths with one another partly through storytelling and narratives supplied by their culture. Truth is a constructed account of lived experiences, a “narrative truth” (Spence, 1982), or “a matter of time and place contingent social agreement and not one that can be referenced to depicting reality as it really is” (Smith, 2010, p. 97). As a consequence, narrative inquirers and their methods have no direct access or clear route into the truth and accuracy of subjective realities, events, and experiences (Smith, 2010).

A social constructionist epistemology assumes that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). That is, as socially constructed beings, our narratives represent “inescapably social phenomena” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 169) which are lodged in interaction and appropriated for use in a miscellany of social contexts. This epistemological stance recognizes that knowledge cannot be based on objective, unbiased observations of the world. Hence, the knower and the process of knowing cannot be separated from what is known, or what can be known (Smith, 2010). Furthermore, since all ways of understanding social worlds are culturally

and historically conditioned, narratives function within, and are framed or situated by, cultural and historical specificities (Chase, 1995; Sparkes & Smith, 2008).

The following are the philosophical assumptions that guide this research study:

*Ontological assumption:* The social reality of amateur genealogists' experiences is subjectively constructed through interactions with others.

*Epistemological assumption:* The subjective reality constructed by an amateur genealogist is identified through collaboration between researcher and genealogist. The reality constructed intersubjectively by the amateur genealogist is reconstructed and interpreted by the researcher.

*Methodological assumption:* The researcher is given mediated access to the subjective reality of an amateur genealogist through a narrative inquiry method.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is the preferred method for this research study because of its suitability to address the research question. In a number of fields and disciplines, narrative inquiries thrive due to the acceptance of an ontological position that suggests the world in which we live is story-shaped (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). An important insight stemming from this ontology is a consideration that narratives form the basis of the self and identity (Ochs & Capps, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988). For narrative inquirers, narratives are a fundamental means of understanding the selves and identities of a narrator or storyteller (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). A wide range of scholars suggest selves, identities, and narratives are so intimately linked that narratives play a central role in the ongoing construction, performance, and maintenance of selves and identities. Notwithstanding variations and differences in emphasis, there is a general agreement among such scholars that selves, identities, and narratives are shaped by a larger sociocultural matrix of relations given our being-in a relational world (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

Narrative inquiry is "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Narrative represents both a phenomenon of study and a method of inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). As a phenomenon, narrative is a way of telling about our lives (Sparkes & Smith, 2008). It is often used interchangeably and

treated synonymously with the term story. Yet, narrative is the general structure that underpins a story and the performative act of storytelling (Goffman, 1959; Smith, 2010). A straightforward definition cannot be offered that covers all applications and meanings of narrative. While most qualitative data are now routinely referred to as narrative data (Polkinghorne, 1995), it is important to caution that “all text and talk is not narrative” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p. 428). What distinguishes narrative from other forms of discourse is that narratives are internally structured, thematically organized, and given context by their temporal, spatial, and social qualities (Glover, 2003; Riessman & Speedy, 2007).

The internal structure of a narrative arranges actors and events into a sequenced temporal order (i.e., a beginning, a middle, and an end; Atkinson, 1998; Sarbin, 1986). More than just a succession of events, a narrative may also be characterized by ordered transformations, unexpected changes, and turning points (Glover, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1995). The spatial dimension of a narrative draws attention to a notion that all events occur in some place, setting, or location. Accordingly, a narrative is shaped and influenced by a relationship between the personal and the social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). It is always constructed and told within a sociocultural context, and in accordance with socially shared narrative resources and conventions of reportage (e.g., norms, genres, tellability, and formats of expression; Atkinson & Delamont, 2006). As such, a narrative often possesses rhetorical devices (e.g., verbal sounds, elongated vowels, emphasis, tone, pitch, and repetition) as well as certain styles and emotions (Riessman, 1993). In addition to an internal structure, a narrative is thematically organized by plots (Glover, 2003). A plot is a conceptual structure used by narrators to understand, contextualize, and convey the meaning of events. Much of human action within a plot is concerned with attempts to progress to a resolution, clarification, or terminal situation (Polkinghorne, 1995). There are a number of different plots (e.g., comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire) with which a narrator uses to order events into a unified, meaningful whole and to attach significance for an intended audience (Riessman, 1993).

As a method, narrative inquiry is composed of diverse traditions, numerous disciplines, and various practices. Contemporary approaches to narrative, regardless of

the field and discipline, almost always have experiential starting points. Narratives are honoured as an important source for bringing meaning to life, and for understanding and communicating the meanings of lived experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Glover, 2003; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Albeit there is a shared interest in experience, narrative inquiry is inspired by, but distinct from, phenomenological perspectives. Although it is difficult to define narrative inquiry due to a wide range of meanings, it may be described as an interpretive process founded on a set of theoretical assumptions (Smith, 2010).

Smith (2010) describes these assumptions in the following way:

That is, humans lead *storied lives*. In part, we live *in, through, and out* of narratives. We *think* in story form, make *meaning* through stories, and make sense of our *experiences* via the stories provided by the *socioculture* realms we inhabit. We not only tell stories, but *do* things with them. Stories do things *to, on, and for* people that can make a *difference*. They help *guide action*; *constitute human realities*; and help frame *who we are* and *who we can be*. Further, stories are a key means by which we know and understand the world. They offer a way of *knowing* oneself and others. (p. 87-88, italics in original)

A pivotal part of being a narrative inquirer signifies embracing the fundamentality of narrative knowing (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988), the way in which our knowledge is embedded in the local and particular, the collaborative quality of the researcher-researched relationship, and the use of stories as data and analysis. With a consideration for multiple ways of knowing, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) articulate that our knowledge and understanding of social worlds are constructed in a narrative form. According to this paradigm of knowing, narrative inquirers are centred on the development of a collaborative relationship with each participant and focused on the local, contextual particularities of events, experiences, people, and settings (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The use of stories as data and analysis, which varies considerably within narrative inquiry, is described in a later section with respect to addressing the purpose and research question of this study.

**Life stories.** Due to the prevalence of methods for studying lives and stories, Cole and Knowles (2001) address the need to inventory and differentiate methods like: autobiography, autoethnography, biography, case history, case study, ethnography,



interpretive biography, life story, life narrative, narrative account, life history, oral history, oral narrative, personal experience story, and personal history. Every one of these methods has its own unique approach, perspective, and uses (Atkinson, 2007). Even though careful consideration had been given to each method, some methods were deemed inapplicable to this research study because of their intent and approach. It is life story, or life narrative, that emerges as appropriate on account of Atkinson's (1998) assertion of life stories as serving the classic function of facilitating an understanding of experiences (e.g., of life, leisure, and travel) and their meanings in relation to selves, identities, and others (see Lieblich et al., 1998). The context of a life story is suitable for understanding the narratives of amateur genealogists and their conveyed understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self.

A life story is "a written or oral account of a life or segment of a life as told [or chosen to be told] by an individual" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 18). It encompasses a subjective understanding of a life of events and experiences. As a representation of life, it can cover the time from birth to present, or before and beyond. As a result of the way in which it captures the essence of what has happened to an individual over the course of life, the term is used interchangeably, and incorrectly, with life history (Atkinson, 1998). This study endeavours to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists and their understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self through storied segments of these individuals' lives. Their segmented stories are told, both thematically and diachronically, about a life before leisure engagements of genealogy, during current leisure engagements of genealogy, and after experiences of travel for genealogy. Regardless of how these stories manifested throughout the interviews, they emerged as parts or segments to a life that fit together to form a "life-as-a-whole perspective" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 238).

### **Participant Recruitment**

Participant recruitment for this research study took place from mid-June to mid-July of 2012. A possible strategy for recruitment was to invite expressions of interest by having three local newspapers feature a short article on my research study and my research interests in genealogy, leisure, and tourism. I made the decision to reject this

strategy because of the possibility that its vast reach would have led not only to an excess amount of interested individuals, but also to the arduousness of having to screen an overabundance of expressions of interest. Another possible strategy for recruitment was to distribute a recruitment poster to local public libraries. Public libraries are a key setting for leisure engagements of genealogy (Santos & Yan, 2010; Yakel, 2004). Moreover, public libraries have designated services for accessing local history resources, census data, church, cemetery, and military records, and online genealogy databases. I accepted this recruitment strategy and invited expressions of interest by placing a recruitment poster on community boards at three local libraries: Welland Public Library, St. Catharines Public Library, and Niagara Falls Public Library (see Appendix A). These three libraries were specifically chosen because they are located in cities with the three highest populations in the Niagara Region. In addition to the services listed above, the special collections at these three libraries contain surname indexes, microfilm resources, periodicals, and directories.

After receiving an inadequate level of interest from the public libraries, I expanded the recruitment strategy to include the possible option of distributing a recruitment poster to the Niagara Peninsula Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS). Next to their recurrent visitations to public libraries, many amateur genealogists hold memberships in local genealogical societies. A number of studies on amateur and professional genealogists (Duff & Johnson, 2003; Jacobson, 1986; Lambert, 1996; Yakel, 2004; Yakel & Torres, 2007) have recruited participants directly from genealogical societies. I requested from the Chair of the Branch to place an electronic copy of the recruitment poster on their website, as well as circulate it to Branch members via their email database. The combination of the public library and genealogical society recruitment strategies was effective at eliciting an acceptable level of interest for this study. Access to expressions of interest for this research study was controlled by two gatekeepers. Prior to placing a recruitment poster on community boards, I had to meet face-to-face with the manager of each of the three public libraries. Upon explaining the details of this study and answering some basic questions of clarification, I was given the necessary approval. Before a poster was placed on the website of the Niagara Peninsula Branch of the OGS, I needed to initiate contact with the Chair of the Branch. It was

through email contact with this gatekeeper that I was given approval for placement of the poster on their website and email circulation to Branch members.

**Purposeful sampling.** Qualitative research focuses on purposefully selected small samples or information-rich cases for in-depth study. The logic of purposeful sampling is premised on a cultivation of insight and profound understanding. It does not profess to be a representation of a larger population, nor does it produce a generalization of findings for such populations (Patton, 2002). As derived from a typology of purposeful sampling strategies (see Creswell, 2007), I implemented criterion sampling on the basis of ensuring that prospective participants experience the phenomena under study and purposefully inform an understanding of the research question. To make sure that individuals could comfortably and sufficiently engage my queries, I established a criterion which required them to have been engaged in tracing their ancestral lineages for a minimum of two years. As a second criterion, I wanted to ascertain whether prospective participants engage in genealogy as leisure—that is, as an uncoerced, intentional, and satisfying or fulfilling leisure engagement (Stebbins, 2007). Thirdly, because this research study is focused on the Canadian context of genealogy, I endeavoured to attract only individuals who self-identify as Canadian. Since it is my understanding that amateur genealogists are descendants of diasporic populations (see Nash, 2002), there was a criterion stipulating that prospective participants had to be of a generation which succeeds diasporic migrants who settled in Canada. As a fourth criterion, such individuals must have travelled one or more times to personal heritage sites, institutions, or documentation centres for a leisure engagement of genealogy. Thus, the four inclusion criteria for this research study were:

1. An individual who has been engaged in tracing ancestral lineages for a minimum of two years.
2. An individual who experiences genealogy as an uncoerced, intentional, and satisfying or fulfilling leisure engagement.
3. An individual who is no less than a second-generation Canadian.

4. An individual who has travelled one or more times for a leisure engagement of genealogy to: a) personal heritage sites (viz., subjectively defined as such; see Timothy, 1997), and/or b) institutions and documentation centres (e.g., public libraries, genealogical centres, record offices, archives, etc.).

I assumed that those individuals who made the effort to contact me during late July and early August of 2012 were genuinely interested in the study. Upon receiving expressions of interest from a total of 17 individuals, I spoke to each individual either by telephone or over email in order to arrange an exchange of questions. I was unable to arrange exchanges with two of the 17 individuals because one was a resident of the United States and the other was leaving on a two week research trip. All but one (i.e., over email) of the exchanges occurred over the telephone, and each exchange was guided by a set of three pre-arranged screening questions (see Appendix B). The main purpose of the screening questions was to address the four inclusion criteria. One of the three screening questions, in particular, asked interested individuals how long they have been engaged in tracing their ancestral lineages, and if and when they see themselves quitting genealogy. Seeing as though the purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, it was important to give interested individuals the opportunity to state their intentions to quit genealogy (viz., to relinquish themselves from engaging genealogy as leisure). This type of query is considered to be a respectable social scientific approach for evaluating the orientations held by people toward their leisure engagements (R. A. Stebbins, personal communication, May 9, 2012).

All 15 individuals who expressed interest in this research study were positioned in a sequenced shortlist of prospective participants. In performing this procedure, I removed identifiers and placed responses to each screening question into a matrix. I carefully examined all cells of this matrix on a case-by-case and cross-case basis. I proceeded to group unique and comparable responses, and sequence the shortlist by identifying outliers on account of the following elements: the number of years engaged in tracing ancestral lineages, diverse and compelling statements indicating current and continuing leisure engagements of genealogy, varied experiences of travel, and a wide range of generations. In that regard, a maximum variation sampling strategy was employed so that I could

achieve a level of heterogeneity across all prospective cases. A concerted effort was also made to have equal representation for both genders. No prospective participants for this study were selected or sequenced with any bias in social categories of age, gender, race, ethnicity, or cultural background. By adhering to the sequenced shortlist, I re-contacted only four individuals, two males and two females, with an invitation to be a participant in the study.

Sampling for this study was an ongoing consideration. At the outset, I consulted a number of narrative inquiry sources (e.g., Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993, 2008) with the objective of determining an appropriate sample size. This endeavour proved to be unsupportive as such sources could only recommend, in a rather ambiguous sense, the use of a small sample over a large sample. Determining the number of participants for qualitative research is generally dependent on a set of factors, such as: the purpose of the study and the research question, the method and study design, available resources to support the inquiry, and the quality of data. Together with a consideration for these factors, I also took into account that a purposeful sample size is an initial projection which continues to remain fluid throughout the research process (Patton, 2002). A review of the narrative inquiry literature would reveal that sample sizes range from one (Creswell, 2007), to 14 (Smith & Sparkes, 2005), to 600 (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). A sample size of four was determined as appropriate in this research study for two reasons. Firstly, rather than attempt to investigate the lives of “a seemingly endless multitude of unique individuals” (Sears, 1992, p. 148), I elected to illuminate the lives of four purposefully chosen individuals who displayed a maximum level of heterogeneity across all expressions of interest. Secondly, I was directed by the lengthy time investment required for building relationships, conducting multiple interviews, and the intricate analytical procedures. A larger sample would have deterred me from establishing collaborative relationships of mutual trust, and more importantly such a circumstance would have prevented me from devoting sufficient time to contemplate the depth of the participants’ narratives during data analysis.

### **Data Collection Method: Life Story Interviews**

Qualitative data can be collected from four mediums: in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation, written documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). In-depth open-ended interviews have been relied on immensely for data collection in narrative inquiry (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008; Smith, 2010). The purpose of such interviews is to enter into participant perspectives, which are assumed to be meaningful, knowable, and accessible (Patton, 2002). Life story interviews, the narrative inquiry method that I employed in this study, are an in-depth approach for collecting stories and gathering details on the subjective essence of an individual's life experience. The point of a life story interview is to allow participants to tell their stories as they choose to tell them, see their lives subjectively over time, and convey the most important experiences, influences, circumstances, issues, and lessons of a lifetime. In a life story interview, the interviewer is a guide in an open-ended, relational process which actively invites participants to tell their stories. The interviewer and participant are co-constructors of a narrative that brings order and meaning to the life of the participant. As a process of reality construction, the interview cultivates meaning-making through stories and does not probe for discrete information (Atkinson, 1998, 2007).

The life story interview is approached scientifically, but carried out as an art (Atkinson, 2007; Smith, 2010). Of the basic approaches to collecting data from open-ended interviews (see Patton, 2002), life story interviews are considered informal, but not conversational. They are informal in the sense that, "*the less structure a life story interview has, the more effective it will be* in achieving the goal of getting the person's own story in the way, form, and style that the individual wants to tell it in" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 41, italics in original). This particular style of interviewing elicits in-depth responses and rich narrative data by making use of a set of pre-determined questions (Atkinson, 1998). I devised a guide of interview questions which was directed at the purpose and research question of this study (see Appendix C). It had also been designed to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each participant. Yet, this guide was a flexible instrument which became adaptable to change and probing as the

interviews progressed. Data collection for this research study began the first week in August of 2012 and concluded after the second week in September of 2012.

Many narrative inquirers prefer to achieve the richness and depth associated with multiple interviews in place of a “one-shot” interview (Atkinson, 1998; Smith, 2010). This practice develops into a process that is “lengthy, unpredictable, and intimate” (Smith, 2010, p. 94), but fundamental to yielding multiple data sources, new meanings, and adequate data saturation for small sample sizes. I therefore divided the interview guide into three segments and conducted three interviews with each of the four participants. Each interview served its own unique purpose both in relation to itself and the whole. I considered it to be important to conduct these multiple interviews because of my eagerness to develop collaborative relationships built on rapport and mutual trust. Furthermore, I trusted that such an interview format would not suppress the participants’ ability to achieve a level of depth in their narratives, or impede my objective of eliciting rich narrative data. This format also provided me with ample flexibility to ask follow-up questions, probe for a deeper level of understanding, seek clarification, correct omissions, attend to internal consistencies and contradictions, and address any changes in the participants’ perspectives. From the participants’ point of view, I believe this format was quite accommodating of opportunities to tell stories as completely and honestly as possible.

An introductory meeting with each of the four participants was carried out one week before the first interview. The rationale for this preliminary meeting was to initiate rapport building, describe the purpose of the study, and express my objective to encourage storytelling activity. I opened all first interviews, as well as every interview thereafter, with a reminder of how to engage my queries. During the interviews, I asked questions to participants that opened up topics of interest, extended their accounts of life diachronically, and invited them to take responsibility for the meaning of their stories. On the one hand, I did not fully abandon my control as a researcher. On the other hand, I offered each participant a greater level of control by minimizing any intrusive interruptions and any perceived necessity to respond to all of the pre-determined questions. In general, we shared control over the entire interview process and collaboratively engaged in active exchanges.

**Pilot interview.** Prior to commencing interviews with the four participants, one pilot interview was conducted with one person who is external to this study and a non-participant. This interview was not audio-recorded nor were any data collected. As a neophyte interviewer, I took concern with claims from narrative inquirers that “asking for and attending to another’s story in the interview context...requires an altered conception of what interviews are and how we should conduct them” (Chase, 1995, p. 2). I decided that I would take full advantage of any available opportunity to introduce myself to the craft of interviewing, assess the interview format and questions, address procedural issues, apply techniques to assist storytelling, and develop my ability to be an empathetic listener. Most of all, I wanted to attend to the interview questions and my ability to encourage the taking up of a storyteller role. Some of the interview and probing questions needed to be reworded after this pilot interview, as they were too verbose and academic. I am confident that this rewording improved comprehension, minimized confusion, and opened up more of a possibility for additional probing during the formal interviews.

**Interview one.** As previously stated, I divided the interview guide into three separate segments and conducted three interviews with each of the four participants. The first interview explored a number of topics related to the participants’ early stage of life, as well as leisure engagements of genealogy in their current stage of life. An opening question about each participant’s ethnic and cultural background was asked with the intention of contextualizing the ancestral ethnicities and cultural heritages of the participant. This interview lasted from a minimum of one hour to a maximum of 90 minutes. Three of these interviews were conducted in participants’ homes, and one was conducted at a participant’s place of work. Although I suggested a few neutral options for interview locations, the participants opted for places of comfort and familiarity.

**Interview two.** Field notes (viz., documenting non-verbal behaviours, interesting responses, rapport, effectiveness of communication, researcher mistakes, and general impressions) written during and after the first interview were reviewed in order to debrief participants and clarify the stories they had already told. The second interview explored a number of topics related to the participants’ leisure engagements of genealogy in their



current stage of life, as well as their experiences of travel for genealogy. An opening question about each participant's immediate family was asked with the aim of giving context to the stories told about specific family members. The shortest of the second interviews was 90 minutes and the longest was 150 minutes. Three of these interviews were conducted in participants' homes, and one was conducted at a participant's place of work.

**Interview three.** A review of field notes from the second interview occurred prior to this interview, and clarifications were provided by some participants on topics previously discussed. The third interview explored the participants' reflections on their leisure engagements of genealogy and future considerations for these engagements. The future orientation taken in this interview was possible because of the foundations established in the first and second interviews. This interview provided one of the last opportunities to address meanings, omissions, consistencies, contradictions, and any changes in participants' perspectives. On average, this interview lasted 30 minutes. Three of these interviews were conducted in participants' homes, and one was conducted at a participant's place of work.

**Life story interviews: A collaborative research relationship.** The nature of my relationship with each participant was something I always acknowledged as important. I admitted to myself early on that our collaborations existed in an interview context. The stories told by all four participants during the multiple interviews were intentionally constructed for me as the researcher. In this respect, participants were unavoidably influenced by my interactions with them in the research setting, and so our interactions rendered a co-construction of narrative data and meaning (Atkinson, 2007; Smith, 2010). The conditions under which this storytelling occurred were shaped by a variety of factors, such as: the way in which the participant understood the purpose of the study, the research setting, the questions asked and not asked, the nature of the audience, and the reasons the participant may have had for telling or not telling a particular story (Lieblich et al., 1998). The participants, their lives, and their stories are all constructions of time. Stories, even if about the past or the future, can only be (re)constructed from the point of

view of the participants' present situation. Moreover, the participants themselves were captured "in the midst of living their stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63) or in single, frozen moments in time. Even after data collection, their lives and stories continue to develop, change, and remain in motion (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Lastly, my relationship with the participants was predominantly influenced by their cultures and histories (Lieblich et al., 1998). In many instances before and after the interviews, I contributed to this relationship by revealing my cultural background and sharing stories of my own personal history.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in narrative inquiry is an inductive process that is both similar to and distinct from conventional qualitative analyzes (Glover, 2003). The general purpose of narrative analysis is to understand how participants imposed order on the flow of experience to make sense of actions, events, and relationships in their lives (Riessman, 1993). It is as much about how things are said as it is about what things are said (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). By commenting on the multitude of narrative analytic methods available, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) express:

There are no formulae or recipes for the "best" way to analyze the stories we elicit and collect. Indeed, one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies. (p. 80)

Smith and Sparkes (2009) stress the importance of an interpretive practice that focuses on "*how* a story is being told... [and] for the various *whats* that are involved – for example, the substance, structure, or plot of the story, the context within which it is told, or the audience to which it is accountable" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998a, p. 165, italics added). This technique of "analytic bracketing" originates in the work of Gubrium and Holstein (1998a, 1998b) and permits attention to be placed on one aspect of a narrative while temporarily suspending analytic interest in another aspect. Quite simply, it involves a procedure for alternating movement, or moving back and forth, between the two components (i.e., *hows* and *whats*) of social life (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998b). Either of the two components, when implemented on its own, is capable of making a valuable

contribution to analyzing the data and addressing the research question of this study. However, implementing one analytic strategy in isolation, versus the use of multiple analytic strategies, may lead to serious omissions and oversights (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). I adopted the position of a “story analyst” (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 279; Polkinghorne, 1995) and the technique of analytic bracketing so as to investigate the diverse facets of the collected data and to show the complexity of the participants’ stories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I addressed the *whats* of the four participants’ stories told in all three interviews by carrying out a thematic analysis. I attended to the *hows* of the four participants’ stories by conducting a structural analysis.

**Thematic analysis.** The stories of all four participants were thematically analyzed through multiple hermeneutic readings (see Appendix D). With the use of different colour pens, I located and sorted stories within “stretches” of talk (Glover, 2003). All of these stories were initially categorized on a case-by-case basis, with the purpose of gathering a sense of the parts (*viz.*, multiple stories) and their relationships to the participant’s narrative as a whole. I acted not to deconstruct or disassemble stories and separate them into groups of thematic units, since such a technique risks fracturing the internal structure of the narrative (Riessman, 1993). My later (re)readings permitted an inductive approach of identifying core themes on a cross-case or comparative basis. Unlike conventional thematic analysis, the centrality of a core theme is not founded on the frequency with which keywords or phrases appear in the narrative. Rather, a theme is established by way of an interpretation of the commonalities, and the significance of these commonalities, between all stories within the specified theme (Glover, 2003). I defined core themes and subthemes, and proceeded to organize them, by utilizing some of the interview questions as a general guide. Upon defining a theme, I also inspected deviations in the data that did not properly fit the selected theme. Such deviations should not be overlooked because, even though they do not conform to a certain theme, they can be just as important as any emergent commonalities (Glover, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1995). The labels I used to define the themes were influenced in part by the sensitizing concepts to which I had been exposed during my review of the research literature. An essential strength of thematic analysis, and one of the reasons why it was implemented in this research study, is its

capacity to develop general, formal, or abstract knowledge about the content of stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Yet, a noteworthy weakness of thematic analysis can be its over-determination of themes at the expense of analyzing the nuances, variations, and depth achieved in storytelling (Riessman, 2008; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Structural analysis seeks to compensate for such a weakness.

**Structural analysis.** This approach to analysis is essentially an unravelling of the threads that hold emplotted stories together (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993). It was carried out by purposefully gathering certain stories, conducting additional hermeneutic readings, and analyzing them for their structural properties (see Appendix D; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Only those stories that had been interpreted to be meaningful were structurally analyzed. Some of these stories were originally highlighted after reviews of the field notes, as well as throughout the transcription process. The key structural properties of stories were not interpreted apart from the rest of the narrative, or, in other words, I analyzed structural properties from stories in the context of the narrative as a whole. This analytic framework granted a perspective that allowed me to subsequently focus on the possible functional qualities of the stories, or their interactions with social discourses and metanarratives (i.e., social, cultural, and institutional narratives; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Though originally a type of analysis for examining the *whats* of stories, it has recently been revealed that a structural approach “adds insights beyond what can be learned [referentially]” (Riessman, 2008, p. 77) from a thematic approach. A notable strength of structural analysis, and one of much relevance to this study’s investigation into amateur genealogists’ narratives and locations of an intergenerational sense of self, is its potential to reveal the participants’ sense of self and identity (Smith & Sparkes, 2009).

### **Reflexivity and Bracketing: My Role as a Researcher**

The growth in reflexivity, self-questioning, or self-understanding among populations in contemporary society has entered into the process of conducting qualitative research (Gergen, 1991; Patton, 2002; Urry & Lash, 1994). Reflexivity refers to a conscious self-awareness of the researcher, or a turning back upon oneself, and a realization by researchers that they are part of the social worlds of which they study

(Myerhoff & Ruby, 1982). The lives and experiences of qualitative researchers are “deeply and unavoidably implicated in [making] meanings” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 3), as well as co-constructing knowledge with participants. Throughout all phases of designing and carrying out this research study, I have sought my own subjectivity as a researcher and disclosed it by writing entries in a journal. These journal entries centred on such themes as: an acknowledgement of my assumptions and preconceptions (i.e., both personal and theoretical) about the phenomena of genealogy, leisure, and tourism, methodological queries, design choices, a self-analysis, field notes, and discussions on my analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

Prior to conducting interviews, I identified my assumptions and preconceptions in order to bracket out, or minimize, their potential influence on data collection. Although I endeavoured to bracket out some of my personal assumptions and preconceptions, I found that I was unable to dispossess myself of them completely. While it is possible to make personal and theoretical preconceptions explicit, it is almost impossible for researchers to leave out or dismiss their personal subjectivities when conducting life story interviews (Atkinson, 1998). In a similar manner, I did not aspire to eliminate bias. Instead, I utilized an acknowledgement of my bias as a tool for insight into both myself as a researcher and the overall research process. Nevertheless, I believe that I was able to suspend my theoretical preconceptions and uphold a persistent curiosity in the varied meanings of the phenomena under study. During data analysis, I stepped in and out of the analytical bracketing process repeatedly. This undertaking encompassed focusing on the ways in which stories were thematically presented, while momentarily suspending a focus on the sociocultural conditions that structure these stories (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998b). These porous bracketing boundaries facilitated an ongoing reintegration and comparison of the bracketed data to broader sociocultural contexts (Gearing, 2004).

### **Rigour of the Study**

Given the multitude of pre-determined criteria for appraising the rigour of qualitative research, “just what criteria are to be used and how they might be involved remains open to question” (Sparkes & Smith, 2009, p. 491). The criteria of trustworthiness set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been widely considered as the

universal standard, or the absolute ideal, for judging qualitative research and separating good-quality studies from studies of insufficient quality (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). After reviewing some of the problems and inherent dangers associated with such a criteriological approach (see Riessman, 1993; Sparkes, 1998), Sparkes and Smith (2009) posit that criteria may be characterized as traits or values which can function as an open prescription for how qualitative researchers conduct their research. The implications for this relativist approach are mild in the sense that any particular trait or value is always subject to reinterpretation as times, conditions, and purposes change (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). A list of criteria for judging the quality of narrative inquiry is still under development. Therefore, I devised a list of appropriate criteria for judging the quality of this research study by adopting criteria presently employed by narrative inquirers. These criteria are: (a) width, (b) coherence, (c) reflexivity, (d) impact, and (e) substantive contribution.

*Width* refers to the comprehensiveness of the findings. Comprehensiveness is achieved by reporting numerous participant quotations and suggesting alternative explanations (Lieblich et. al, 1998). *Coherence* denotes the way in which different parts of an interpretation come together to form a complete and meaningful picture. Interpretations are evaluated in terms of their effectiveness to connect dissimilar parts and position them against existing theories and previous research (Lieblich et. al, 1998; Riessman, 1993). *Reflexivity* examines the researcher's cognisance of the epistemology of postmodernism, and issues associated with data gathering, ethical conduct, and self-exposure. *Impact* questions the ways in which the report of findings affects the reader emotionally and intellectually, as well as influences the generation of new research questions or practices. *Substantive contribution* considers how the research study contributes to an understanding of social life (Richardson, 2000).

### **Ethical Considerations**

This research study was reviewed and given ethical clearance by Brock University's Social Science Research Ethics Board (see Appendix E). Such approval demonstrates that this study conformed to the University's ethical standards with regard to participant recruitment and data collection. At the time when I invited expressions of

interest, I made sure to tell all 17 individuals that their interest in the study did not immediately qualify them to be a participant. These individuals also had the right to decline to answer any of the screening questions if they so desired. At the start of the first interview, the nature of the study was explained and any questions were answered. An informed consent letter was distributed and signed by all four participants before the collection of any data (see Appendix F). The consent letter described the purpose of the research study, the possible benefits and risks associated with participation, the right to voluntary withdrawal at any time, and the procedures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of data. There were no emotional risks associated with participation in this study. That is to say, no emotional risks were anticipated which would have been any greater than those encountered in the participants' everyday lives.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed prior to data analysis. All audio and visual content from the interviews, as well as any material with identifiers (i.e., contact information, responses to screening questions) were kept confidential and secure in my possession. I was the only person to have listened to the audio-recordings and the only other individuals to have viewed the transcripts were the participants themselves. I followed a recommendation by Riessman (1993) and extended to the four participants an opportunity to view their interview transcripts, verify the accuracy of its contents, and add to or amend them if necessary. All four participants took advantage of this opportunity to review their transcripts, but only two participants made additional comments and amended the clarity (i.e., spelling, grammar, and use of language) of their responses. Even though all participants agreed to use their real names, it was decided that pseudonyms would be used in all future documents and publications in order to assist anonymity and protect their identities. Finally, I upheld anonymity by not reporting any biographical details or the names of people, places, or things that could easily be traced back to the participant in question.

## Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

### **Introduction**

This qualitative research study employs a narrative inquiry method in order to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity. The research question is: how do amateur genealogists—who embark on a quest for personal identity—convey their understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self? Life story interviews were conducted with four amateur genealogists over a period of six weeks. Data from these interviews were, in accordance with the technique of analytic bracketing (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998a, 1998b), thematically and structurally analyzed. To preface the report of findings from these analyzes, two succinct descriptions are presented that address interpretation and representation of the narrative data.

### **Interpretation of Stories**

The aim of narrative inquiry is to interpret the ways in which participants perceive reality and make sense of their lives, experiences, and relationships with others in the social world (Atkinson, 1998; Lieblich et al., 1998; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). All stories are interpretations to begin with, as participants tell them through their own interpretive lenses (Atkinson, 1998). There are two types of interpretation that can be applied to the participants' stories: (a) those that emerge from the researcher's experiential, personal, or subjective frame of reference, and (b) those that are theoretically grounded. Most interpretations are a merging of these two types, or a skillful balance between subjectivity and theory. This study merges the subjective and the theoretical by applying external frames of reference and my own internal frame of reference as the researcher. These external frames of reference draw primarily, though not entirely, from theoretical perspectives in the leisure and tourism studies fields.

Since no two researchers are able to analyze and interpret data in precisely the same way (Atkinson, 1998), these interpretations stand as my own. While my interpretations are viable, they are not the only possible interpretations of the data. When data analysis was complete, I invited each participant to assess the congruence of my



interpretations with their subjective realities, as well as to elicit their support for, or disagreement with, the themes and subthemes. I employed this strategy, known as “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), at the same time acknowledging that affirmation by member checking is “questionable” (Riessman, 1993, p. 66). Although considered to be an important step in avoiding misrepresentations of narrative data, Riessman (1993) contends that “stories are not static” (p. 66) and their meanings can continue to shift even after the acts of storytelling. Upon receiving the findings from this research study, two of the four participants provided only brief comments that had then been incorporated into the existing themes and subthemes.

Readers and audiences are presumed to bring their own experiences, expectations, and cultural perspectives into their interactions with the findings from this study (Lieblich et al., 1998). This eclectic group of readers and audiences is encouraged to assess their confidence in my analysis and interpretations against the quality of verisimilitude (Glover, 2003), and against varying gradations of validity (Polkinghorne, 2007). It is worth cautioning readers that they should be concerned with the plausibility of my knowledge claims, as well as the credibility of my explanations, rather than the reliability of the “historical truths” (Spence, 1982) reported in the participants’ stories (Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 1993). Even though storytellers are considered to be both the expert and the authority on their lives, their stories are not to be read as an “exact record” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 60) of everything that has happened to them over the course of their lives. A life story is mediated by memory, which means that it is inherently imperfect, susceptible to distortion, and accessible only from the point of view of the present.

**My internal frame of reference.** Analysis and interpretation have much to do with what I, as a neophyte qualitative researcher and narrative inquirer, bring to the stories of each of the four participants. I am inserting myself into this text because an interpretivist qualitative research approach acknowledges researchers as interpreters of data who are not disembodied, omniscient, and detached (Creswell, 2007; Richardson, 2000). I am a 26-year-old white male who was born to average-middle class, university-educated parents, and raised in Canada. I received primary, secondary, and university

education from three separate institutions in the Niagara Region. I have Italian ethnicity on my maternal side and a blend of ethnicities (i.e., English, Scottish, Irish, and French-Canadian) on my paternal side. I identify as a third-generation Italian and a sixth-generation Canadian of Western European lineage. I approach the concepts of leisure and tourism from a position as a former student of a tourism studies program and a current student of a leisure studies program. I have had numerous opportunities in my life, thus far, to travel and experience places within Canada, USA, Central America, and Western Europe, as well as work in the tourism and hospitality industries. Throughout the course of my life, I have been engaging in many forms of leisure, recreation, and sport. Genealogy, however, is not a leisure engagement that I can claim to be part of my leisure repertoire.

My personal interest, and subsequently my academic interest, in leisure engagements of genealogy are largely founded on second-hand experience. On brief occasions prior to the development of this study, I observed and discussed the family tree my aunt had created on our Italian ancestors. These discussions served as an impetus to read extracts of a family history book prepared by a great-uncle on our paternal ancestors. In the initial phases of designing this research study, my understandings of genealogy and family history research were admittedly vague. Some understandings, in part, were formed from an exposure to mass media sources (e.g., broadcast, print, and Internet media). My review of the multidisciplinary academic literature on genealogy played a central role in forming my initial conceptions and ways of thinking on the subject of genealogy. Of course these understandings were not always fixed, as I remained open to new meanings constructed by the four storytellers during their respective interviews.

### **Representation of Stories**

Riessman (1993) and Glover (2003) counsel narrative inquirers to be attuned to issues of voice, authority, and representation in the report of findings. Though there are an assortment of possible representational strategies to employ in any given narrative inquiry (e.g., autoethnography, fiction, ethnodrama, and poetic representation; see Richardson, 2000), the findings of an analysis of stories can be represented in the form of a realist tale (Smith, 2010; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes, 2002). I made a responsible

and strategic decision to write about the findings of this research study using the conventions of a realist tale. Many in the academic community have taken a position on realist tales as “universally reflecting post-positivist thinking and as unable to be evocative or represent complexity” (Smith, 2010, p. 101). This position would be erroneous given that the conventions of realist tales have been modified to reflect interpretivist thinking (Smith, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). The conventions of realist tales are: (a) experiential authority, (b) participant’s point of view, and (c) interpretive omnipotence (Sparkes, 2002).

*Experiential authority* refers to the almost complete absence of the researcher in the findings’ report and remainder of the text. An author with experiential authority constructs texts so as to establish distance from the data. Yet this absence of the author or researcher should be perceived as a “textual illusion” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 52), since it is the researcher who interprets the data, selects the quotations, and shapes the stories presented. *Participant’s point of view* signifies the use of extensive, closely edited quotations in order to convey that the point of view expressed is that of the participant and not of the researcher. This intentional use of quotations is to give readers and audiences a strong sense of the participants’ voices, but again these voices are presented within stories that the researcher co-constructed, interpreted, and reported. *Interpretive omnipotence* considers the ways in which interpretation utilizes abstract theories to propose explanations and alternative explanations of the data. In sum, all three realist conventions are “neither good nor bad in themselves” (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 281), and when engaged properly, they can deliver detailed and complex understandings of social worlds (Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes, 2002).

### **Introduction of Participants**

This research study involves the participation of two females and two males in life story interviews conducted by the researcher. All four participants are self-identifying Canadians who engage in genealogy as leisure and travelled for a leisure engagement of genealogy. They are white, of Western European ancestry, and most of their ancestries have been traced to the British Isles. These four participants represent a wide range of generations (3<sup>rd</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>) as Canadians, and a broad range of years of engagement (4 – 40

years) in genealogy. A short introduction to the four storytellers is given for the purpose of establishing the general circumstances in which their stories and storytelling occurred (Glover, 2003). Once more, pseudonyms have been assigned to maintain anonymity.

*Thomas* is a retiree, in his late 50s, who started engaging in genealogy around the time when he retired four years ago. He is an 8<sup>th</sup> generation Canadian with distant lineages that go back to Holland and Germany on his maternal and paternal sides respectively. Thomas is the youngest of three sons who lived, together with their parents, in a small rural community in southern Ontario. He met his wife and got married during their studies at university. The pair have two children, who are each married and without children. Thomas worked as a teacher until his retirement, and he currently lives with his wife in a city in southern Ontario.

*Isabelle* is a retiree, in her mid-70s, who started engaging in genealogy approximately 40 years ago. She is a 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> generation Canadian with lineages that trace to England, Scotland, Ireland, Quebec, and Germany (Pennsylvania Dutch). Isabelle is an only child of parents who lived in a small town in southern Ontario. Isabelle is married with a blended family of one daughter and one stepson. She has one granddaughter, and several step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Isabelle worked as a teacher until her retirement, and she currently lives with her husband in a small town in southern Ontario.

*Madeleine* is a retiree, in her early 70s, who started engaging in genealogy approximately 10-15 years ago. She is a 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> generation Canadian with lineages that go back to Scotland and the United Kingdom on her maternal and paternal sides respectively. Growing up, she lived in eastern Ontario with her younger brother and two parents. Madeleine and her husband met while living in the United States. Together they had one daughter, and shortly after her birth they moved back to Canada. She worked as a teacher until her retirement, when, around the same time, her daughter married and had two sons. Madeleine currently lives as a widow in a city in southern Ontario.

*Patrick* is an historian, in his early 60s, who started engaging in genealogy approximately 25-30 years ago. He is a 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> generation Canadian with distant lineages that trace to Ireland on his maternal and paternal sides, as well as Scotland and Quebec (New France). Growing up, Patrick lived in eastern Ontario with his two older sisters and two younger brothers. He is married with three sons, a daughter, and one

grandchild. Patrick continues to work as an historian, and he currently lives with his wife in a small town in southern Ontario.

### **Reflections on Family History Storytelling**

From the moment Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick entered the world, they have been “surrounded by stories—stories of their parents and their parents before them, of family and friends” (Fivush, 2008, p. 49). Their families, as well as families in general, develop a corpus of stories that are (re)told and (re)shaped over time (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004; Langellier & Peterson, 2006). Such stories are family stories, which have been constructed by multiple family members, and from experiences of family dispersed across time and space (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). Family stories are also symbolic resources through which family members understand the family’s past, maintain that past in the present, and build family history (Jorgenson & Bochner, 2004). Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick begin the construction of their narratives by reflecting on family history storytelling. The period of time in which this storytelling occurred, or did not occur, spans an indeterminate number of years. For ease of reading, references are made to an “early stage of life”, which is intended to denote a non-deterministic life course experienced by the four storytellers previous to their involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy.

**Continuity and discontinuity in family history storytelling.** Families form small group cultures that, while embedded in a larger culture and society, work to share their histories through storytelling (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). In order for these histories to be shared, “someone must do the work of remembering, composing, and telling stories in such a way that they are memorable and told again” (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 72). Family history stories also rely on someone to do the work of listening or consuming, especially if these stories are to remain meaningful for succeeding generations. In this sense, stories of a family’s history are subject to conditions both internal and external to the family that influence the continuous and discontinuous nature of storytelling practices. Of the four participants’ narratives, some are marked by a pattern of *discontinuity* and others are marked by a pattern of *continuity*.

Discontinuity is represented by conditions of spatial and temporal *detachment*, whereas continuity is represented by conditions of spatial and temporal *attachment*. With respect to spatial attachment, it is acknowledged as a physical proximity to spaces (e.g., sites, places, or areas) of ancestral settlement and extended family habitation. Isabelle and Patrick speak of experiences of spatial attachment in their early lives. Patrick mentions that his ancestors, and generations of relatives thereafter, all settled in relatively close proximity to one another after immigrating to Canada. This proximity afforded his family the opportunity to go to local cemeteries, see ancestral grave sites, and visit or be visited by family and relatives. Isabelle constructs her experiences of spatial attachment differently from the way in which Patrick constructs his experiences. She takes pride in locating her childhood in a space that continues to be meaningful to her and the history of her family:

To begin with, I lived in an area where there was a lot of history....I lived in this area and heard stories about the people from [great] grandpa. Also, my mother was very interested in history. I think I inherited her desire to know family history as well as any other history. And I think this is it, I keep going back to the word 'family history'. As a little girl, I played in a very historic place. It was my playground. Hearing the stories that were told about it and [great] grandpa knew all these people, and then he spoke to mother about it. So I started out in a very historic area. I think, also, so many of the family that I have on my father's side were actually here in this area, so that you start with this area and then the stories go back, so you have a base to work on. I've been here forever, along with the paternal side of my family. So I can talk about my grandparents. Well, I have walked in the area that they lived in....I know where my grandparents and great-grandparents lived.

The people with whom Isabelle's paternal great-grandfather had built social relationships became the characters in, and sources of, his stories. She makes the point of emphasizing her and her mother's readiness to listen to these stories, albeit such stories were not always centred on their paternal ancestors and family history. Nevertheless, Isabelle's great-grandfather's stories encourage her to reflect on the historical significance of her spatial surroundings and their connections to her paternal heritage. The relationship Isabelle shared with her great-grandfather assists in the formation of a sense of spatial attachment to the area where her paternal ancestors settled and extended family lived. While Patrick and Isabelle share a common experience of spatial proximity, a sense of meaningful spatial attachment is less forthcoming in Patrick's narrative.

Spatial attachment breeds temporal attachment for Isabelle. Temporal attachment is a subjective proximity to the lives and experiences of ancestors and extended family. In addition to her paternal great-grandfather, Isabelle sources her aunts as family history storytellers. The manner in which Isabelle gathered some family history stories was from overhearing whispers exchanged between her mother and aunts—because “the women were interested in telling the stories”, whereas “the men”, with the exception of Isabelle’s paternal great-grandfather, “didn’t seem to be [too] interested”. Upon affirming this difference in gender roles, she claims these oral stories were not normally written down, told aloud, or “embellished in (the) family gatherings”, for suspicion on the part of her mother and aunts that they may have been untrue or shameful. Isabelle gives meaning to her mother’s role as the medium or channel through which family history stories were communicated to her. Her mother’s interests in family history, as well as her desires to understand it, are something Isabelle believes she “inherited”:

But mother was interested in it, and she got a long with dad’s side, and she learned the history of that side of it and gave that to me, along with whatever she got from my maternal side too. It was really my mother picking up stories along the way that gave me this, and she had always been interested in any form of history....So I think all the stories predominantly came through my mother.

Narrative interactions between Isabelle, her paternal great-grandfather, her aunts, and her mother present Isabelle with an understanding of how her family “evolved” over time and history. She delights in memories of her early life when there were stories about castles in England and Scotland, a minor family scandal, immigration to the New World, a connection to a legendary Scottish poet, and some of the experiences of her paternal (great-)grandparents. Although the stories to which Isabelle listened were more about her paternal family than her maternal family, they constitute a family history that extends beyond her personal past. These circumstances in Isabelle’s early life enable her to articulate a temporal connection to the lives and experiences of her paternal great-grandparents:

Because of the stories that I was told, they had become people. I had an insight to them, I am very fortunate in the first place because I had great-grandparents alive. So I think because of that I knew them as real people. Therefore, they’re ancestors to a lot of people, where they weren’t to me, they were actually human beings. I had a great-grandmother alive, and so we visited. When you get these people still alive, then you are

fortunate. And because of that, the ancestors, the older people, were human to me. I didn't see anything foreign, or a disconnect, I think that that was it. They were connected in my life, and their lives then were just the stories that I gradually built-on.

Spatial detachment is a physical distancing from spaces of ancestral settlement and extended family habitation. Temporal detachment is a subjective distancing from the lives and experiences of ancestors and extended family. These two types of detachment, in stories told by Thomas and Madeleine, seem to have been influenced by decisions, events, and circumstances surrounding their parents and grandparents. In a spatial sense, Thomas' and Madeleine's immediate families settled in cities or towns beyond (i.e., two or more hours away) where their ancestors settled and extended family lived at the time. Spatial detachment was experienced specifically by Madeleine, as her family did not own a car and attend many family gatherings, celebrations, or reunions. Thomas' father purchased a farmhouse in a small agricultural community that, while being distanced from his paternal side of the family, enabled them to keep in relatively close contact with Thomas' maternal side of the family. Families who live in geographical distance from other members of the family are acknowledged as emblematic of infrequent familial contact and irregular participation in family rituals (Ryan, Pearce, Anas & Norris, 2004). Spatial detachments are experiences of circumstance in Thomas' and Madeleine's early lives. It is circumstantial because the decision to live in distance was made by parents who may or may not have been influenced by any number of social, political, and economic forces. This spatial distance is not communicated as a matter of concern for Thomas and Madeleine.

Spatial detachment is conflated with temporal detachment for Madeleine and Thomas. Madeleine never knew her maternal and paternal grandparents, and Thomas never met the paternal grandparents who died before his birth. Even though Thomas was able to visit his maternal grandfather as an adolescent and this grandfather did speak about his family, Thomas reveals that some of his grandfather's stories ended up being more about his personal past (e.g., a courtship story) than the family's history. This is one of the only places in Thomas' narrative that he broaches the subject of his maternal side of the family, for the remainder of his narrative is almost squarely aligned with discussing his paternal side of the family. Still, these events of death appear to have impeded any



potential opportunities for Madeleine and Thomas to listen to family history stories directly from their grandparents. Detachments from grandparents who were never known or who passed away are presented by Ryan et al. (2004) as liable to leave grandchildren not only without knowledge of general historical events, but also devoid of an understanding of family history and their grandparents' life stories. Consequently, there was a justifiable shift of the family history storyteller role to Madeleine's and Thomas' parents. Yet during Thomas' upbringing, his father did not talk very much about his parents, siblings, or extended family. Thomas posits that his father's detachments from family may have been a result of his birth order (i.e., second to youngest) in a family of seven children. Madeleine speaks of parents who "dwelt in the present" and just "lived for today". Their orientation toward the present is something that Madeleine accepts and validates by considering the interplay of emotions, behaviour, and culture. She proceeds to express that, given her parents' academic and literary inclinations, "you would think they might have told [family history] stories". But her mother did not tell family history stories, and her father, though "certainly concerned with genealogy", was a "quiet man" and not an "emotional person". He was Scottish, and the "Scots are not very wordy about feelings".

A comparable condition of temporal detachment may be found with Patrick, whose mother told "history stories—not many family history stories, but history stories". The decision made by parents not to take on the role of a family history storyteller, for reasons not explicitly conveyed by Madeleine and Thomas, are speculated in a slightly cynical tone by Patrick:

Probably because they didn't think we were interested. You'd get stories of current people, and funny stories about an old uncle who did whatever, that sort of thing. But you never got this traditional knowledge, something that happened 200 years ago. They probably just didn't feel any one was interested. When you're showing interest in it, then they'd talk about it....What 12-year-old kid is fascinated by something that happened 200 years ago? They're not. I have four children, and I've never sat down and bored them with genealogy. They know it's there, but unless they show an interest, I'm not going to sit them down, [and say] 'Let me tell you some family stories.'

This speculation can only stand as such. Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas engage in some conjectural thought so as to rationalize with themselves why their parents did not create opportunities and situations in which to tell family history stories. There are many

potential factors, some of which their parents had control or no control over, that may have contributed to this absence of family history storytelling. Yet, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas choose not to pursue this matter any further in their narratives. The combined influence of spatial and temporal detachments, both for Thomas and Madeleine, left them with “no [family history] stories” (Madeleine), “not a lot of [family history] stories” (Thomas), or few family history stories that they could recollect. Interestingly, even with a sense of spatial attachment, Patrick’s temporal detachment resulted in an awareness of his family’s ethnic and spatial origins (i.e., Ireland as the country of origin) but few narrative interactions which gave him an understanding of his family’s history. Altogether, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas do not express a discontent for the storytelling situation in their respective families. In other words, family history is not something of which they feel deprived or denied during their early lives.

Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas may well have been “born into” (Langellier & Peterson, 2006, p. 109) family stories and family histories. However, not all family history stories work their way into being told and retold (Stone, 1988). There are events and circumstances, such as death and spatial distance, which impinge upon the nature of storytelling practices. There may also be a dearth of intergenerational storytelling that, although simple to identify, can be challenging for individuals to make sense of. The tasks of storytelling can be allocated in diverse ways, but generally a small group of family members (viz., women in particular) perform stories as family history storytellers (Ryan et al., 2004; Fivush et al., 2008) or “keepers of the kin” (Langellier & Peterson, 2006, p. 110). Telling family history stories, namely those stories about the family’s past which give significance to space and time, can be meaningful to the kin who listen or consume them. Narrative interactions between generations of family, at least in the stories told by Isabelle, establish for her a sense of continuity that otherwise may not have emerged.

**(Dis)continuity in family history storytelling and knowledge.** Notwithstanding continuity and discontinuity in family history storytelling, all four participants convey a continual or uninterrupted knowledge of their respective families’ ethnic origins during an early stage in their lives. Thomas expresses that, despite an erroneous assumption

about his maternal ethnicity due to the spelling of the surname, he was reasonably aware of his maternal connection to Holland. Family surnames, as these cultural symbols to which meanings can be attributed, are a signifier that Thomas needed to utilize in order to grasp his ethnic origins. In Isabelle's case, she says that ever since her childhood she "used to quote the fact that [she] was English, Irish, Scottish, French, and Pennsylvania Dutch". Patrick and his family "were aware that the family had come from Ireland at some point [in time]" and continued to identify as "Irish, Irish-Canadian". Madeleine tells a story of an upbringing that, though surrounded by a Scottish Gaelic-speaking father and symbols of Scotland in her home, was not overshadowed by Scottish ethnicity or culture:

Growing up I always thought of myself as being Scottish because my father's family would be 100% Scottish....I was still very conscious of the Scottish background....I always knew about the Scottish aspect....All I remember that had much to do [with this] was my father going to the St. Andrew's Society. So that's why I felt much more Scottish. I felt Scottish even though it didn't have much of a bearing on what we did....But the ethnicity wasn't important. I think I'd say that.

The participants' knowledge of their ethnic origins connotes a sort of retained understanding of ancestral ethnicities. This phenomenon of ethnic retention appeals to a notion that, within the sociocultural dynamics of Canadian society, ethnicity is a social construction which can be maintained in families over time and across generations. As members of a multicultural and ethnically diverse society, many Canadians are encouraged to retain, but not required to identify with, their ancestral ethnicities (Howard-Hassman, 1999). Ancestral ethnicities can also weaken, or vanish, due to the ephemerality of time and the transformative processes of assimilation in a surrounding society (Waters, 1990). Not all Canadians and their families, therefore, retain knowledge of their ethnic origins. For instance, during his early life, and as a consequence of the anglicization of his surname, Thomas was not fully aware of his paternal ethnic connection to Germany. A retained understanding of ancestral ethnicities over space (viz., especially after migrations) and across multiple generations may have something to do with what Basu (2007), in citing Cohen (1997), refers to as "diasporic...[or] ethnic group consciousness" (p. 22). A consciousness of ethnic origins suggests that ethnicity is, in complex ways, imparted to succeeding generations after diasporic migrants settle in a host country and the distance between generations begins to expand with time.

Knowledge of ethnic origins during their early lives, on the other hand, should not imply that Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas currently identify with their ancestral ethnicities. Addressing ethnic identifications for each of the storytellers is well beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to point out that their multiple ancestral ethnicities, as well as the ethnic connections (dis)confirmed through genealogy, are expected to complicate matters of ethnic identification even further (see Nash, 2002).

Ethnicity has generally been oriented toward subjective beliefs in the origins and history of a family. As long as these beliefs are sustained over time, the tie between individuals and their ethnic origins may be inescapable (Waters, 1990). Knowledge of ethnic origins, however, is conceivably less disposed to escape than knowledge of ancestral origins. To characterize the nature of their knowledge of family history during an early stage in their lives, the adjective “weak” is used by Madeleine and “superficial” by Patrick. Madeleine draws on the researcher’s use of this word just prior to her response, whereas Patrick extracts from his own vocabulary. Madeleine remembers that her father once discussed the family’s origins in the northeast of Scotland and their involvement with the Highland Clearances. She structures her narrative around an outcome in which she “didn’t ask him [more] about it” or follow-up with any type of probing question. The Highland Clearances occurred in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and since it was approximately one hundred years before her childhood, she “was so busy growing up, doing things, that it didn’t seem important” to make any further enquiries. Patrick comments on having overheard a claim made either by his paternal grandmother or father that they may have had a close relative go down with the Titanic. But Patrick, like Madeleine, describes having other interests at the time:

Growing up, my dad was a World War II veteran, my grandfather was a World War I veteran, so I was much more interested in their experiences: my grandfather’s [experiences] in the trenches in World War I and my father in World War II. So, I was much more interested in 20<sup>th</sup> century history than the earlier stuff... As I said, it was much more interesting, 20<sup>th</sup> century stuff, than anything else. You know, every once in a while you visit some old aunt, or some old aunt or uncle would come and visit us, and I really didn’t care how they were related to me. You’d go to someone’s smelly, old house and my dad would chat, and I’d be bored to tears. So, it wasn’t a great interest at the time, other than knowing that we were of Irish descent, and all that goes with that, you know, the sense of humour, and my mother was very superstitious.

Madeleine's and Patrick's apparent disinterests in acquiring family history knowledge are not necessarily to be understood as a firm disinterest. It has already been established that, during their early lives, Madeleine and Patrick were temporally detached from the lives and experiences of ancestors and extended family by parents who did not assume the role of a family history storyteller. This dearth of storytelling should not indicate that Madeleine's and Patrick's parents did not possess their own knowledge of family history. Instead, their parents may have been quite knowledgeable about their respective family histories. With regard to their fathers, Patrick's father had an understanding of the county in Ireland from which his family may have originated. Madeleine's father also had an understanding of his family's spatial origins, and his interests in genealogy influenced him to contribute writings and information to a family history book. Madeleine's and Patrick's narratives communicate that their interests were not focused on acquiring knowledge of their ancestral origins. It is not that they were intentionally disinterested in family history. Rather, their interests were directed toward other objects and stimuli, such as Patrick, whose interests had been in 20<sup>th</sup> century history and the war experiences of his father and paternal grandfather.

Although Thomas did not use a specific term or adjective to characterize his knowledge of family history, he does tell a story about having to do a family tree for a high school sociology course. This project delivered a rather straightforward understanding of his maternal ethnic origins, but its "inaccuracies" (viz., through the lens of his present stock of knowledge) did not lead to a detailed understanding of his paternal family history. Thomas' knowledge of his paternal family, seemingly because of a family-oriented but "workaholic" father, was so unclear that he discloses:

My dad didn't talk much about his family....As a family, I'm not sure how close my dad was with his three brothers and three sisters....I knew my father had all these brothers. My wife will say that when we met I couldn't name my dad's brothers. I knew only two or three of my cousins on my [dad's] side because they were all from...far away.

Thomas', Madeleine's, and Patrick's obscure understandings of their family histories situate focus on gaps in family history knowledge (see Santos & Yan, 2010, for the mystic and abstract nature of family history knowledge). Though each of these individuals was able to express knowledge of ethnic and spatial origins, as well as speak

of grandparents known and unknown, their understandings of the lives and experiences of ancestors beyond their grandparent's generation were insubstantial. In the absence of written material sources of family history (e.g., books, family bibles, (auto)biographies, and memoirs), family history knowledge is acquired, or handed down, from preceding generations in the form of oral stories (Basu, 2007). Stories and storytelling are "one of the primary ways that families and family members...remember [and] connect generations" (Koenig Kellas, 2010, p. 1). Without stories of their family histories, Thomas, Madeleine, and Patrick were temporally detached during an early stage of their lives. Their disengagements from intergenerational storytelling resulted in gaps in family history knowledge which, at that time in their lives, remained unfilled.

Due to the "smattering of [family history] stories" to which she was gladly exposed, Isabelle recounts having "glimmers of knowledge [of her family history] along the way". Isabelle expands upon the meaning of this exposure by drawing attention to her interests in both history and family history:

They were just family stories and a lot of people weren't interested, let's face it....So a lot of time people aren't interested in these stories, where, as a little girl, I was always interested in all the stories that occurred. I think this was their lack of desire to know family background, to understand where these people came from, and the lives they must have had....I was interested in history too. I think they were stories, but they were family stories, and it was just something that I was interested in hearing about as a little girl and into adulthood. Mother encouraged it. I'd listen to my aunts if they were here visiting with mother and you get that glimmer of something in the past. But basically, it was all stories up until the time that I started the genealogy. No one else had done anything family research related that I knew. So they were all just stories.

The interests in family history that Isabelle "inherited" from an "encouraging" mother, together with narrative interactions between multiple generations of her family, sets Isabelle's knowledge of family history apart from Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas. An important feature of Isabelle's narrative, and one that distinguishes it from the other three participants' narratives, is the temporal depth of her family history stories. The family stories about castles, scandal, immigration, and a connection to an illustrious historical figure are, both thematically and historically, before her grandparents' generation. Although Isabelle does not specify whether these specific stories were told by her paternal grandparents or great-grandparents, she repeats several times how "fortunate" she was to have met, visited, and connected with these people.

The events and circumstances in an early stage of Isabelle's life should not convey that she represents an ideal case. The continuity in family history storytelling and "glimmers" of family history knowledge experienced by Isabelle are no more ideal than the discontinuity in family history storytelling and "gaps" in family history knowledge experienced by Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas. Knowledge of family history may come into being because memories were received, and stories had been told, shared, and consumed. Gaps in family history knowledge may come into being because memories were lost, and stories had not been told, shared, and consumed. Nonetheless these four individuals ultimately come to engage, as amateur genealogists, in a process of "constructing [their] families' collective memories" (Lambert, 2002, p. 124) from stocks of knowledge once characterized by either gaps or glimmers.

### **Initiating Involvements with Leisure Engagements of Genealogy**

Leisure does not choose who engages it. Instead, individuals make conscious and meaningful choices to engage leisure because of the promise it delivers in terms of benefits and experience (Singh, 2005). When presented with opportunities to engage leisure, many individuals are intentional and purposeful in their actions toward choosing an engagement with which to be involved. Whether of the temporary, situational, or enduring variety (Havitz & Mannell, 2005), involvements with a leisure engagement are bound by the conditions surrounding such involvements. How an individual becomes involved with a leisure engagement is not typically linked to a standardized experience, and so, the context may only be unique to the individual in question. Therefore the contexts in which Patrick, Madeleine, Isabelle, and Thomas become involved with leisure engagements of genealogy are encompassing of marked disparities and respective differences. Yet, given that all four storytellers share the same core leisure engagement, there are some significant commonalities across these contexts which merit particular attention.

**Stimuli for involvements.** Involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy for Isabelle, Patrick, and Thomas did not just come about spontaneously; rather, they were influenced by another person's involvement with genealogy. There was one day,

about 40 years ago, when Isabelle received a phone call from a person inquiring about a possible connection in the branches of their family trees. This distant relative, who shared the same surname, requested that Isabelle gather some information in order to confirm this connection. She willingly accepted this request, and managed to confirm the connection by going back almost five generations in her family's history. At a time when he was a student in a graduate program, Patrick had often frequented the National Archives in order to conduct academic historical research. During "breaks" from this research, he would gladly search the various repositories of the archival institution as a way to assist his sister, who herself was engaged in researching their family's history in Canada. Upon his retirement from teaching, Thomas attended a gathering where he met a former colleague who was very eager to discuss a possible distant connection in their respective family trees. Even though this encounter "thoroughly bored" Thomas, and he "couldn't [quite] figure it all out", he still acted as a polite listener to a person who meticulously explained her genealogy.

Actions taken by a colleague, a sister, and a distant relative to introduce Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle to experiences of genealogy serve as a source of stimulus for their forthcoming involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy. Such actions are considered to be a stimulus source because situational interactions among these individuals appear to have generated an appeal, an interest, or an attraction to experiences associated with a leisure engagement of genealogy. Isabelle's experience with confirming a connection in her family tree produced an "instantaneous" appeal to genealogy which, from that moment in time, "really took off". Conversely, Patrick was "mildly interested" in his family's history as he compliantly performed his role as a "research assistant". With Thomas, his story communicates a sudden attraction to the exposures that leisure engagements of genealogy can provide:

But anyhow, she was telling me all of this and showing me all the books and charts and where they came from and all this stuff, and going on. It was neat seeing the papers, it was neat seeing the pictures, but one old person looks like the next old person...I was very polite to her, but I just couldn't figure it all out. However, that night, at about 10 o'clock, I found myself throwing in names in Google, and turned out that '*bingo*' (his emphasis), it came up that I could trace my ancestor back to 1610, and it was all done for me. And then all of a sudden it started to make a little more sense to me and I wanted to know more about it.



Regardless of its manifestation as an appeal, an interest, or an attraction, it is something that seems to vary in appraisal over time. Prior to Thomas' involvement with genealogy, his brother had been extensively engaged in researching their family's history. He shared discoveries and stories with Thomas for more than a decade, but Thomas was "not really interested". It was not until after both the death of his parents and the encounter with his colleague that Thomas would eventually email his brother and say: "you know all that stuff you've been telling me for (10) years, well, I'm finally interested". In a related matter, Patrick's mild interests in genealogy became "piqued" or further roused by the events of death in his family. Sorting out old family photos at the home of his deceased grandmother and attending the wake of his father were, over the span of five years, "catalysts" that "got things rolling" for Patrick. Accordingly, interests in a leisure engagement of genealogy may not only reveal themselves in an instantaneous manner, but they may also reveal themselves in a gradual progression of intensities (i.e., not interested, mildly interested, interested, very interested). Evidence of a similar pattern can be found in Basu's (2007) study, as his participants specify that their interests in family history surfaced in childhood and remained dormant until "renewed" (p. 38) during middle age.

Involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy are not exclusively limited to a context in which there was influence from another person's involvement with genealogy. These involvements may be initiated by many diverse stimuli and situational influences. A source of stimulus for Madeleine's involvement with a leisure engagement of genealogy was her actions to read a copy of a diary written by an ancestor in her husband's family and subsequently travel to England. Madeleine found it "quite exciting" to be able to visit the town, home, church, and family cemetery of this ancestor. Her journey into reading about the life of her husband's ancestor, in addition to physically tracing his footsteps in Lancashire county, "was the first thing that was so unusual, so different" from anything Madeleine understood about her ancestral background. She was particularly fascinated by the diary's themes of religion, marriage, immigration, and settlement that, again, differed from the themes of the few family history stories to which she had been exposed. Madeleine articulates with this story that her interest in genealogy was stimulated by a sense of novelty and exploration.

When interests in genealogy emerged rather intensely, Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle were provoked to respond to their curiosities by asking themselves questions (i.e., What do I already know? What do I not know? What would I like to know about my family history?). Parallels drawn between these three individuals demonstrate that they wanted “to know more” about their ancestors, seek answers to their questions about them, and find out precisely from where their ancestors originated. Despite whether their family history knowledge was characterized by gaps or glimmers, Thomas, Patrick, Isabelle, and Madeleine seem to have been motivated to build on their existing stocks of knowledge and gain an understanding of their ancestors for its own sake and value. Patrick and Isabelle interpret this undertaking as fundamental to “understanding” their origins—both as an individual and as a member of their respective families:

...it's really...the pursuit of (archaic) knowledge that is of no real import on anything other than (as I said kind of) understanding where you come from. [Patrick]

My personal feeling is you can't go forward without having some understanding of what was before. I really believe that. The past is part of your present and your future. [Isabelle]

Understanding the context of initiating involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy is different from a number of studies (e.g., Kramer, 2011; Lambert, 1996; Nash, 2002; Santos & Yan, 2010) that have, as yet, investigated only the reasons and meanings for continuing with leisure engagements of genealogy. Lambert (1996) acknowledges how identifying these already existing reasons for pursuing genealogy can be limiting, in that “people’s motivation today may differ from whatever first attracted them to genealogy” (Lambert, 1996, p. 120) at the time when they first became involved. By giving a context to their initial involvements, it is possible to identify a stimulus source, a set of circumstances in which the stimulus was evoked, and the experiences that placed Madeleine, Isabelle, Thomas, and Patrick on the path toward continuing involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy.

**Turn to involvements.** One notable limitation to be found with the participants’ stories of their initial involvements is that scant acknowledgement was given to the conditions surrounding their shifts toward, or turns to, involvement with a leisure

engagement of genealogy. In order to gain some additional context into this turn, Madeleine, Isabelle, Thomas, and Patrick were encouraged to describe their experiences around the time when they first became involved with leisure engagements of genealogy. The narratives of some of the participants are characterized by events of change in family life. These events of change are neither attributable to a specific location in the life course nor assumed to follow a predictable sequence over time. They are, nonetheless, recognizable changes in family life that occur with the passage of time. Moreover, such changes are not understood to be linked to broad social theorizations which may propose a relationship between the changing structures and functions of contemporary families and a turn to involvements (cf. Hackstaff, 2009).

Events of change or transformation in a narrative are considered to be turning points (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives constructed by Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick share a common turning point of death around the time of their initial involvements. Madeleine's husband passed away the year before her retirement. Thomas' mother and father died within three years of each other, and their passing occurred approximately two years before his retirement. Patrick experienced the death of his paternal grandmother, which was followed five years later by the death of his father. Regardless of whether death is imminent or untimely, the consequences of parent, grandparent, and spousal death can be transformative for understandings of self and identity. It is gathered that, prior to experiencing the transformative consequences of death, Patrick, Thomas, and Madeleine were relatively stable in their identities as children, parents, and spouses. The stability of these identities was revealed to have been disrupted by death, as previous roles in the family transitioned into new ones (i.e., role of a widow, and a (grand)motherless and (grand)fatherless adult). Upon losing his last surviving parent, Thomas perceives an altering of his role in the family:

I think one of the things here is that, and it may come up later, my parents both passed away and all of a sudden you realize *you're it* (his emphasis).

By reassessing the meaning of the roles occupied by his deceased parents, Thomas comes to understand that it is his generation which now encompasses the last remaining generation, the elder generation. He insinuates that this change in relationship

with his parents did not manifest until he was confronted with the implications of their death. In encountering the premature death of his father, Patrick tells of a catalytic experience that bridged a celebration of life with relatives, stories, and ancestry:

Then when my father died, I had just begun my career, and I think that got me thinking. It was probably at my dad's wake, when we had all the old relatives there, and there were relatives I hadn't seen since I was a little kid, and that sort of thing. And, just in talking to people, and that sort of thing. The typical wake is you tell funny stories from the deceased's past and so on and so forth. I may have become a little more interested at that point, and thinking, 'Well, gee, maybe I could find exactly where my family came from in Ireland' and that sort of thing. It kind of started me on that quest. So that was 35 years ago, I mean that was a while back.

Death in the family is identified by Hackstaff (2009) as a common turning point for individuals who are motivated to pursue interests in genealogy and family history. But death per se cannot be taken for granted as a direct "motivator" (p. 139) for Madeleine's, Thomas's, and Patrick's turns to involvement. It is indeed one of many "critical incidents [or turning points] that occur to force a person to recognize 'I am not the same person as I was, as I used to be'" (Strauss, 1959/1997, p. 95). Throughout the course of life, individuals expect to experience a constellation of critical incidents that result in self-questioning, re-evaluations of others, negotiations of self, and irreversible changes in perspective (Strauss, 1959/1997). Within the domain of everyday family living, such experiences are ordinarily associated with marriages, births, illnesses, divorces, retirements, and deaths. To expand upon this notion, Patrick gives an account of the events in his life, as well as in the life of his family, that he believes transformed his understandings of himself, his family, and their extended history:

It (genealogy) is something that I think people turn to once they're sort of established. And in some cases, having your own children because when you have children, when you look at your baby lying there, or a grandchild for example, what strikes you about that is that this is part of a long chain that goes back to, you know, what, the first amoeba that crawled from the primordial ocean, or something like that. It's a long chain. It just continues on. And you get feelings like that. Maybe if you've never thought about family history at all, when you're holding your own child, I think that kind of graphically comes along. And also I think death in families, as it happened with my grandmother and my father as kind of stimuli to further research. And my sister was doing genealogy, so it served as stimuli I think. When you start to look at things like that, you know, renewal, and additions to a family, births of children, and weddings also become of interest from that point of view because you start to then join genealogies. And that's what a child does, as well, the child joins, you know, that's the link between two families. And

deaths, it tends to give you an idea of a process, I suppose, and you become a little more curious about where it all came from.

The connections Patrick develops between multiple turning points and leisure engagements of genealogy are very distinct to his narrative. They reveal that, while death was identified by Patrick as a catalyst to his turn to involvements with genealogy, it is not appropriate to disconnect death from other significant turning points in his life. There is not necessarily one definable event that influences a turn to involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy. Instead, there are many events of change in family life, and such events either occur “simultaneously [or] converge like vectors across time” (Hackstaff, 2009, p. 136). Both Patrick and Thomas construct their narratives with multiple turning points so as to make sense of transitions in role and negotiations of self and identity experienced prior to their initial involvements. For example, Thomas recalls his transformed understandings following a transition into retirement:

When you retire you can get an idea that you're done. Your identity was your job and your work....It's sort of the idea that you are responsible for your own happiness, or is somebody else, or is your job responsible for your happiness? I had a lot of happiness in teaching but I don't think it was my job's responsibility to make me happy.

Drawing attention to turning points provides an additional layer of contextualization to initial involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy. Patrick and Thomas are evidently more expressive of their turning points than Madeleine and Isabelle. The latter pair's silence with regard to turning points would be reasonably suggestive of an absence of these abrupt “milestone” (Strauss, 1959/1997, p. 95) occurrences in their lives and the lives of their families. It is very difficult to be certain whether this absence is the consequence of a reluctance to mention a particular event, the proximity of the event in time, or a struggle to be articulate. With Isabelle and Madeleine, the changes in family life that influenced them to turn to involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy are not attached to clearly demarcated events or incidents. Although they do not enrich their narratives with epiphanous moments (Denzin, 1989) that “strike with great impact” (Strauss, 1959/1997, p. 95), Isabelle and Madeleine are still understood to have experienced role transitions in their families.

Over a period of several years, Madeleine was exiting her former roles as a wife, teacher, and mother, and entering new roles as a widow, retiree, and empty nester. Isabelle, rather, was maintaining her roles as teacher and parent, and entering a new role as “companion” to her parents. Madeleine’s and Isabelle’s role transitions are not represented by discrete events with which negotiations of self and identity can be openly identified. Yet, as their roles in the family transition into something new or different, there are accompanying shifts in Madeleine’s and Isabelle’s interactions with their families. Madeleine continued to manage relationships with her only daughter and brother from a sizable spatial distance, but she also found herself engaging and interacting regularly with a cohesive “framework of friends”. As an only child to her parents, Isabelle made a deliberate choice to establish her family home right behind her parent’s home. And together with years of selfless companionship, she formed “a real family relationship” with her parents. The influence of these “change[s] in [family] relations” (Strauss, 1959/1997, p. 95) on Madeleine’s and Isabelle’s turns to involvement with leisure engagements of genealogy is nuanced and ambiguous. On the one hand, their relationships with family changed into something other than what they were in the past. On the other hand, it is not stark whether these changes required (re)negotiations of self and identity.

Having the four storytellers further contextualize their initial involvements is insightful insofar as it facilitates an understanding of the conditions surrounding a turn to involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy. Changes in family life, both marked and unmarked by turning points, are constructed in narratives that assist Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine to make sense of role transitions within a family structure. Each individual transitioned in and out of a multiplicity of diverse family roles at differing locations in the life course. Furthermore, such transitions signify a process in which changes in family roles are concomitant with the (re)defining of family relationships. By implication, the turn to involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy for Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine may be a consequence of the fluidity or continually evolving character of their family relationships.

### **Telling Stories of Travel for a Leisure Engagement of Genealogy**

In addition to continued reiterations of the importance of narratives in the construction of self and identity, narratives are also a valued resource for understanding a variety of travel experiences (McCabe & Foster, 2006; Noy, 2004; Rickly-Boyd, 2009). McCabe and Foster (2006) argue that tourists inherently possess a “*narrativistic*’ attitude” (p. 195, italics in original), which is drawn upon by them to give accounts of people, places, and events encountered during their experiences. The experiences of genealogy-tracing tourists (viz., amateur genealogists who travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy) are understood to encompass the voluntary, temporary movement of people away from their places of residence and toward a selected place or destination. Many of these selected places can be said to have either “direct or indirect connections with an individual’s own lineage” (Timothy & Boyd, 2006, p. 11). Travel to such places for a leisure engagement of genealogy is examined with the aim of understanding how participants make sense of their travel experiences.

Once prompted to present a storied account of their experiences of travelling for a leisure engagement of genealogy, Madeleine, Isabelle, and Patrick situate some of their narrations in the setting of what would be considered an ancestral homeland. The term “home” may not always be an apposite characterization of this setting given that Madeleine and Isabelle neither communicate it as such nor make reference to a particular country, village, or site as an ideal and imaginary home. Patrick is the only individual to have ascribed a county in Ireland with both the meaning of an “ideal landscape” and a home of spiritual belonging. Madeleine, Isabelle, and Patrick have ancestral lineages that trace to different countries within the United Kingdom. While they have affinities for certain countries over others, there is insufficient indication that an ancestral home, in its singular form, exists in the lands external to their home country of Canada (see Santos & Yan, 2010, for dismissals by genealogy-tracing tourists of homeland belonging). Then again, this research study is not directed at an investigation of homeland orientations for genealogy-tracing tourists.

Studies of genealogy-tracing tourism have conceived of this tourism niche as comprising travel mainly to ancestral homelands (Santos & Yan, 2010). Travel to the countries, regions, and towns from which ancestors migrated should not be considered as

taking place exclusively in ancestral homelands. The trajectory of many migratory routes was not unidirectional, which is to say that ancestors did not always migrate from a homeland to one permanent place of settlement. The migrations of ancestors, upon reaching post-colonial settler societies, sometimes led to temporary settlements and tentative resettlements in a number of different places across North America. Hence, all four participants discuss travelling to “ancestral lands” (Timothy, 2008, p. 116) at local, regional, and national levels. On that point, Isabelle and Thomas wish to stress that travelling to ancestral lands is not limited to places like a homeland, because “you never know where you’re going to find your family history”, and “as people open themselves up more to their family history, they’ll [begin to] realize how many different places they’re connected to”.

**Visits to personal heritage sites.** Personal heritage is a level, or scale, of heritage sites at which tourists “experience heritage of a personal nature” (Timothy, 1997, p. 751). Sites at this level are understood to be located in places that attract tourists who possess emotional connections (Timothy, 1997). These sites can vary from those associated with a tourist’s personal past to ones that are linked to a collective past and a shared history. Beyond these theoretical assumptions, which are proposed primarily by Timothy (1997), there is very little known about the visits of genealogy-tracing tourists to personal heritage sites. Experiences at such sites are conjectured to resonate with the emotional needs, as well as the personal identities, of these tourists. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that their experiences visiting personal heritage sites are different from visits to global, mass marketed heritage sites (Poria, Butler & Airey, 2003b; Timothy & Boyd, 2006).

About six years ago, Patrick travelled with his two older sisters to Ireland to visit the different counties and townlands where his ancestors lived before immigrating to Canada. This was a “special trip”, a “sort of pilgrimage”, which they intentionally planned to do together and without the accompaniment of their spouses and children. Patrick tells of an exploratory experience, one which was facilitated by relatively no fixed itinerary and a reliable means of transportation. It was also exploratory in the sense that they were searching “specifically...[for] four places” which they had “already



researched” prior to arriving in Ireland. As a way to emphasize the unconventional, or non-institutionalized, nature of his experience, Patrick recounts the following events:

Well, we left all our spouses at home, you know, it was just the three of us that went, and we landed in Belfast and rented a car and stayed in a series of B-and-Bs, and we travelled basically through several counties, primarily in northern Ireland, one county in southern Ireland, to these various small places that our ancestors came from.... We visited some very distant relatives and came home again. So we were over there for two weeks and it was very uplifting, very fruitful, very interesting, but not the typical vacation that most people would enjoy, you know. We didn’t really go to any of the tourist traps or the highlights or you know whatever. We were going to small villages in rural areas and meeting with the local people.

Diversions away from highly developed tourist attractions toward off-the-beaten-path personal heritage sites are, as may be expected, characteristic of this tourist experience (Basu, 2004a, 2007; Timothy, 1997). The reasons for visiting such sites are anything but clear and straightforward, yet it may be enough to say that they are not always of a deeply personal and emotional nature. Reasons for visiting cemeteries, for instance, may be centred on what Patrick illustrates as a utilitarian pursuit of looking “up and down the rows of tombstones and photographing them [in order] to transcribe the information later on”. In the course of Madeleine’s numerous travels to the ancestral lands of Scotland, she appears to have made it a constant priority to visit local cemeteries, which served her purpose of “finding” the prospective ancestral “connections” within. Conversely, with Isabelle, being a genealogy-tracing tourist is much more than performing informed and uninformed searches for her ancestors. She presents an alternative understanding of the connections made during visits to the cemeteries of her ancestors:

Black and white paper doesn’t do genealogy justice. It’s walking in a cemetery and seeing the name of your family, and knowing that they lived there. Walking in a town in England with my mother’s people, and walking to the church and knowing that my grandparents were married there and my family was buried there. And that’s where you get the sensation or feeling of genealogy, and so that’s why I tied so much of my travels in with it, and I was fortunate in that regard.

The experience of a cemetery in the ancestral lands of England is, according to Isabelle, more about “walking in the path of [her] ancestors” than pursuing surnames and information inscribed on gravestones. There is an evoking of “feelings” or emotions that

goes along with attaching her physical presence in this place to the lives that were once lived there. Isabelle's emotional involvement in this experience signifies a regard for certain sites as being a part of her heritage. In this respect only, some of her experiences differ from those of Madeleine and Patrick, who would seemingly "gaze" (Urry, 1990) upon cemeteries—not necessarily to appeal to an emotional reaction, but—in order to trace ancestors and any surviving biographical information about their lives (see Poria et al., 2003b, for the heritage tourist gaze).

The emotions associated with visiting some personal heritage sites are denoted as having a spiritual quality about them. As Isabelle puts into words the meanings attached to her experiences in England, she ascribes these meanings to a "spiritual sense"—a sense of "knowing" that places "helped build personalities and attitudes that overflowed into the family as the family came along". By reflecting on his experiences in the villages and landscapes of Ireland, beyond just visits to cemeteries, Patrick contributes a similar interpretation of the spiritual:

I guess from the spiritual point of view, you know, standing on this turf where my ancestors had been born and walked and lived and died and that sort of thing. It was kind of a special feeling, almost spiritual, you know, from that sense....I don't know, I mean it's just this sort of emotional feeling I suppose, its, you know, you feel by visiting a place where your ancestors were born and died and were buried and so on and so forth. You just feel a certain, maybe, special connection with the place. It's hard to describe, and by spiritual I guess I meant it speaks to the heart or speaks to the soul. It's just a feeling that you can't describe. I don't mean by spiritual, I don't mean it makes you get down on your knees and pray to saints or, you know, saviours or whatever. It's a non-religious spirituality you know, speaks to the soul I guess, and the essence of being.

At one with the significance Isabelle places on "being" in the lands of her ancestors, Patrick is delighted to underscore how "special" it was for him to be connecting with his ancestral homeland. He has some difficulty with putting into words the source of the emotions experienced during his travels. Patrick does, though, manage to accentuate the meaning of these emotions and their power to satisfy the desires of his heart and soul. He is able to make better sense of these desires when he remembers that his father "always wanted to do the same thing", that is, experience the lands of Ireland, but "he never fulfilled that wish". All things considered, stories such as those told by Patrick and Isabelle consist of "emotions....and feelings of [spiritual] connection" (Basu, 2007, p. 49) which are certainly not uncommon to tourist experiences in ancestral lands

(Basu, 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Bruner, 1996; Louie, 2001; Stephenson, 2002; Timothy, 1997; Timothy & Teye, 2004).

The visual consumption of personal heritage sites is very pronounced in the experiences of Madeleine, Patrick, and Isabelle. Tourism is by its very nature a multi-sensory experience (Rickly-Boyd, 2009), but it is the visual character of the tourist experience that permeates these travel stories. Sights consumed in genealogy-tracing tourism are, as inferred already, endowed by the tourist with different layers of personal meaning. Madeleine sets her narrative apart from the others by providing lengthy descriptions of sites visited, but overall this narrative lacks the tones of emotion and spirituality that mark Patrick's and Isabelle's narratives. In any case, cemeteries, churches, local museums, heritagescapes, and landscapes have been gazed upon by Madeleine, Patrick, and Isabelle with differing levels of interest. In some of these situations, their gazes are personal and private, only to be shared with the significant others (e.g., children, siblings, parents, spouses, and relatives) who accompanied them and, perhaps as well, experienced an emotional connection with the object in question (Urry, 1990).

Madeleine often highlights the importance she placed on visiting old family homes in Ontario and Scotland. There are stories about times when she, her brother, and cousins would take old family photographs and search for plots of land in the towns of ancestral settlement in southern Ontario. When in Scotland, she purposely wanted to take-in the sight of her great-great-grandmother's home, which Madeleine's grandmother had written about visiting herself almost a half-century earlier. This "continuity" of seeing a home that three generations of family had previously visited was one of Madeleine's "most exciting" travel moments. Throughout the remainder of her travels, she continued to search for these ancestral homes, and "it is a searching", because they are distinct signs of the traces her ancestors left behind. Patrick too was enthralled with "the ruins of the original 18<sup>th</sup> century" ancestral homes that he and his sisters managed to locate in Ireland. "The entire purpose of the trip" to Ireland was to fill the gaps in Patrick's research, which essentially meant using maps and land surveys to locate the homes in which his ancestors lived. As well as a surviving marker of ancestral life, the

ancestral home is, to both Patrick and Madeleine, a physical structure that symbolically connects them to their families' origins.

An interesting feature of this tourist experience is that sights of personal heritage do not have to be visually extraordinary in their own right. Rather, the sights of personal heritage and the signs of ancestral life can be found in the most ordinary of objects. It was the banality of artefacts contained within a local museum in New York State, like a ticket stub for the train, which caused Thomas to muse over a possible historical connection to his ancestors. "I had the most beautiful feeling" says Isabelle, who recalls her visit to Connecticut and the startling sight of a street named after her family. Isabelle was aware that her family history had been connected to Connecticut, but it was due to this icon of her family's history, represented by the street sign, that she describes imaginatively voyaging into a different time period:

...it was named after the family. I have a picture of that. You know, not that the street was anything significant, it wasn't like a major street, but still it was part of the family history that was there. So when I walked that area I tried to visually get rid of all the buildings around, and tried to go back in time to what it might have looked like, or what the people saw, or what they might have been doing. That's when you get the sense of who you are, and that's the build-up of who you are. What is the quality of the person throughout the centuries? It gives you who you are, and that's very important in my side of the genealogy, what made up my genes.

Isabelle frequently brings up this act of visualizing the routines of her ancestors' lives, as if she herself was living among them in that time and place. In order to understand their lives in the past, Isabelle would pause at personal heritage sites—at the ruins of a tower in Scotland and at the garden of an ancestral home in England—and "see life as it was for them (too)". These pauses are also moments of reflection, "getting the atmosphere of the area", and perceiving local areas "in a different light". Patrick offers an equally stimulating description of his pauses and contemplative thoughts when visiting a cemetery in eastern Ontario:

So, you go and stand where you're great-great-great grandfather and grandmother are buried...I'll pause and think you know, who were these people, what were their likes and dislikes, what songs did they sing, what books did they read, what was their life like, and what was the day like when they were buried here, and just you know all those, just trying to relate I suppose in that way to the ancestors. It doesn't really go beyond that. I mean it's just an interest in them and in their lifestyles and that sort of thing. Trying to understand where I come from, and you know again it's sort of an emotional (slash)

spiritual type thing, to stand and look down and start to wonder about what things were like at one time.

The physical or corporeal proximity of the genealogy-tracing tourist to personal heritage sites that have been read, learned, researched, and even imagined deepens the meaning of visual consumptions. By consuming symbolic objects of their ancestral past, Isabelle and Patrick convey that they are seeking to locate themselves in time, space, and history. In doing so, they are also inspired to imagine and understand their ancestors' lives, as well as the influences that such lives may have had on their own lives. Not all genealogy-tracing tourists, however, can be said to react to their visual consumptions in precisely the same ways. Madeleine voices "appreciation" for her ancestors upon travelling to experience personal heritage sites in such a visually consumptive manner:

Well, I think that when you know the history of the people who lived there....It gives you a broader appreciation first of all of how the people lived, and....I think it makes you appreciate what was going on in the country at the different times....I think it's your family who were here, even if it was 200 years before...But again it gave an interest to that part of the country, to think, 'Oh, this is where they came from.'

Gazing upon the ancestral past, or the history of a family, is concerned with travel to the places and lands that have a direct historical connection to the tourist. Sites of personal heritage can normally be found in these places, and visual consumptions of such sites would appear to be necessary due to the valuing of a tangible (e.g., objects, artefacts, and landscapes) family history. The value placed on visually consuming personal heritage sites is not completely homogeneous. Personal heritage sites (e.g., cemeteries, churches, homes, museums, etc.) are apt to be assigned a practical value by the genealogy-tracing tourist for their utility in the process of tracing ancestors, acquiring historical knowledge, and searching for biographical information. Contrariwise, personal heritage sites are revered relics of a collective past and a shared history that may be valued for their symbolic, spiritual, and emotional connection to the lives of genealogy-tracing tourists.

**Leisure mobilities for engagements of genealogy.** Travel to ancestral lands, "historic places" (Poria et al., 2003b, p. 240), and personal heritage sites are undeniably prevailing elements of a genealogy-tracing tourist experience. With focus on genealogy-

tracing tourism aimed so intently at travel to ancestral homelands and personal heritage sites (Santos & Yan, 2010), the leisure mobilities of genealogy-tracing tourists to public libraries, genealogical centres, record offices, archives, meetings, and conferences have been denigrated by superfluous scholarly description. Suffused with notions of the ordinary and the pragmatic, visits to such institutions and assemblages are all too readily disregarded amidst the extraordinary journeys to heritage sites in the spiritually enriched and emotionally evocative spaces of an ancestral homeland. Even though the four participants in this study tell stories of visits to these institutions and assemblages for leisure engagements of genealogy, there are few shared features of their stories which converge to form a unifying theme. In spite of this shortcoming, their leisure mobilities are revealing of patterns that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of a genealogy-tracing tourist experience.

“My travels have been predominantly fed by genealogy” remarks Isabelle with a chuckle, “of the trips I’ve taken, I never look at a town, or a part of the country, without tying it in my brain to (some of) the family”. With this assertion, Isabelle strives to articulate the salience of genealogy in influencing her travel choices. It may be necessary to take into consideration that Isabelle’s four decades of engagement in genealogy have presented her with more opportunities to travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy than someone like Thomas, who admits to there being “plenty of places” to which he has not yet travelled for genealogical purposes. In acknowledging this point, Thomas compensates for his inexperience with genealogical travel by telling detailed stories of all the places he plans on visiting (e.g., the Rhineland-Palatinate region in southwestern Germany, and the Calabria region in southern Italy) in “trips to come”. Nevertheless, Isabelle’s commentaries on genealogical travel can serve as a comparative to statements made by Thomas, Madeleine, and Patrick. These three individuals concede that while genealogy is a leisure engagement which motivates people to travel, it is not necessarily the primary motive in decisions for such travel. Thomas regards genealogy not as “the sole purpose of trips” taken by him and his wife, “but it is a part of it...[and] it will become more of a purpose”. Madeleine sheds light on the role played by genealogy in her travels to Scotland:

But the travel that I take mostly hasn't to do with genealogy, the genealogy gets worked in....I mean, the genealogy, in answer to your question, I think was a compliment that when I was going, say to Scotland, then I tried my best to find, to get to where the family might have been....So I think what you would say [is that] the genealogy has made the travel more interesting, and certainly, when I went, the main reason was achieved but this (genealogy) complimented it....Well I think, when I went with my brother and my daughter, the genealogy was quite important, especially with my daughter because that was sort of the idea, that we would go to Scotland and she would take me and that's where I chose to send her. So the trip was definitely for genealogy, and with my brother, I think also that genealogy was important....I would have gone anyway, but it (genealogy) allowed me then to do something else I wanted to do. I worked it on. So I think that's the way it went.

Genealogy, as a leisure engagement which may be secondary or ancillary to other leisure engagements performed during travel, is not interpreted in the same way by Santos and Yan (2010). Leisure engagements of genealogy are perceived by the two researchers to have taken "precedence over any other leisure activities" (Santos & Yan, 2009, p. 62) their participants chose to experience while on vacation. Thomas and Patrick speak at length about quite the opposite, namely that genealogy does not necessarily hold precedence over any other leisure engagements experienced during travel. Thomas' visits to public libraries in Ontario and New York State are always narrated as events that have been allotted, for an hour or two, to addressing a specific gap in his research. Since Thomas and his wife travel together mainly as a unit, genealogy is engaged in tandem with the many other leisure engagements that the pair chooses to experience in their travels. As an historian, Patrick is regularly obliged to travel for work. He, too, seeks to make allotments for genealogy and other leisure engagements (e.g., visiting friends and relatives) in his prearranged business meeting itinerary. Still, "it's not travelling specifically for genealogy, but it's extending a trip perhaps to pursue that". Patrick goes on to clarify what is meant by genealogy as an extension of his business travels:

...what I might do is decide to go up a couple of days early, or stay a couple of days late, you know depending on whether it's a Friday or a Monday, and visit with my oldest sister and we'll compare genealogical notes, and she's an active researcher as well. And she researches the family in Canada, and I research the family in Ireland, so I've always got information for her and vice versa. And you know we'll sit down and, I mean that's not all we do, but sit down and discuss to a certain extent genealogy and pursue different lines of inquiry and that sort of thing. I also might use those opportunities to go to the archives...

“So it’s that kind of thing, it’s not really going out of my way on some great genealogical quest”, affirms Patrick. This “detouring”, as he prefers to call it, suggests that some tourists are willing to take an indirect route, go an extra distance, or modify their travel plans in order to experience a leisure engagement of genealogy. Hence, visits to public libraries, genealogical centres, record offices, and archives are arguably excursions or side trips within a broader travel experience. With the possible exception of Isabelle’s visits to these institutions and documentation centres upon attendance at genealogy conferences on the eastern coast of the US, such excursions may seldom comprise the tourists’ entire experience in their ancestral lands.

Leisure mobilities for engagements of genealogy are, understatedly, “driven by the need to access or acquire specific information” (Meethan, 2004, p. 146). However, few of the stories told by Thomas, Madeleine, Patrick, and Isabelle recount experiences motivated by a need to travel solely to access data, records, or information. This omission is not implying, as some researchers would speculate, that the digitization and availability of archival material via the Internet reduces the need to travel (see Meethan, 2004, 2008). Rather, it may insinuate that the leisure mobilities of genealogy-tracing tourists are organized around attempts at accessing information or fulfilling a specific research objective. In relation to her first unsuccessful attempt at seeing her father’s military records in Ottawa, Madeleine shows initiative by returning to Library and Archives Canada for a second, and successful, try at retrieving this recorded data. By comparison, Thomas makes mention of vacationing with his wife in the Finger Lakes of Upstate New York, and given the vicinity, it was his planned intention to visit the public library of a nearby town “for authentication” (Meethan, 2004, p. 146) of a birth certificate. His effort to verify this birth certificate proved futile, as he utters so frankly:

...it was a dead end. But again, a dead end is knowing that I searched, and we can’t find it in these situations.

Events as disappointing as the one depicted by Thomas are part and parcel of the experience (Santos & Yan, 2010), since genealogy-tracing tourists have a general expectation that their searches for the authentic, original, and elusive are likely to be hindered by the limits of information retrieval. Favourable outcomes of these mobilities



arise not only from the thrills of potentially discovering the novel, the hidden, or the enigmatic, but also from the memories and understandings that remain long after the tourist returns home. Patrick's and Madeleine's recollections of journeys to Ireland and Scotland, respectively, are centred on deliberate searches for knowledge and understandings which would otherwise be unattainable at home, and celebrations of the local people who graciously assisted in endeavours to trace the origins of their families. By making efforts to "talk to [local] people who...are interested in history", Madeleine was fortunate to have met plenty of "helpful" people who either assisted her with transportation to cemeteries or steered her in the direction of an ancestor's home. From a "hospitable" distant relative, to an enjoyment of the *craic*, to the story of a verger who guided him "eight miles out of his way...to the cemetery", Patrick comes away with a positive impression of the Irish locals' support of his leisure engagements of genealogy:

...we found the people of northern Ireland particularly friendly, accommodating, you know helpful, beyond anything we could have imagined....That's the kind of people we met over there, all extremely helpful and really accommodating. That was a special trip. I'd love to go back some day.

Memories of objects discovered and knowledge acquired are what encapsulate the experiences of Isabelle as a genealogy-tracing tourist. It was during one of her trips to a small historical town on the Maine coast, several years ago, that Isabelle just happened to visit a used bookstore. She was not intent on looking for anything specific; but because Isabelle had been engaged in genealogy for years already, she knew when she "accidentally" found a book of colonial records that it was a "rare" find. Within the contents of this book was information about a tenth-generation "chimney sweep" who Isabelle considers to be her "most startling find". Isabelle's experiences with having found her "family history" in this "unique" character leave her with two important messages to communicate. First, genealogy-tracing tourists may "never have quite the right amount of time" to find what they are looking for, and if and when they do, the sense of accomplishment is elating though nonetheless transient. Second, discovering objects of significance to the history of a family can function as a souvenir and memento of travel, or a reminder imbued with the meanings of both a memorable travel experience and a tangible ancestral past:

At any time whenever I travel, I bring home the pamphlets, the books, because particularly if you ever do a story of your own family, you want to put that information in the story because it's not dates that are important. It's the background, the culture, the way of life, the political aspect of it. Those are the important things. This is one of the major points that I wanted to stress on (the) travel.

The leisure mobilities of genealogy-tracing tourists are equally about accessing data, records, or information as making journeys or pilgrimages to an ancestral homeland. A semblance of the former to an “academic model of [travelling to conduct] fieldwork and research” (Meethan, 2004, p. 146) almost seems to detach the leisure mobilities of Patrick, Thomas, Isabelle, and Madeleine from conventional tourist experiences. Conventionalities of tourist experience notwithstanding, the desire these four individuals possess for learning in a tourism context is too important to ignore. Beyond the ostensible banalities of information seeking are tourists who strive to enrich their cultural capital and gain an understanding of themselves and their ancestors. Learning is often purposely, and sometimes incidentally, integrated into their experiences because of the relevance of the connection between the nature of this learning and the meaningfulness of their family histories. Further insights into this tourist experience may give the impression that Patrick, Thomas, Isabelle, and Madeleine are learning about very similar things, but they are most certainly not learning in the same ways. Additionally, the learning that transpires in leisure mobilities for engagements of genealogy cannot be restricted to the isolating moments when an individual is, or is not, a tourist. The process of learning family history is to be acknowledged as cumulative and continuing, and only the individual can choose when that learning ought to stop.

### **Locating Ancestors and a Sense of Self**

Getting to know ancestors, as “real” people who once lived and walked on the earth, necessitates that amateur genealogists not only locate them, but more importantly “restore them to life” (Lambert, 2006, p. 318). Then again, when it comes to restoring ancestors back to life, only so much of their lives can be restored from the mediocrity of factual data and dates. Taking Isabelle as an example, she draws inspiration from a poem written by Linda Ellis entitled *The Dash* to signify that the essence of her ancestors’ lives cannot be adequately captured from the dashes which separate dates of birth, marriage,

and death. Discontentment with the redundancy of data and dates is normally the juncture at which these amateur genealogists modify their methods and practices in order to make them more consonant with those employed in family history research. By utilizing such practices in their leisure engagements of genealogy, Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas (re)construct stories of their located ancestors and situate them within a broadly conceived family history narrative. This narrative would appear to be the product of a mixed methods research approach, otherwise regarded as an interweaving of the objective and the subjective. In a paradigmatic sense, the practices of these four amateur genealogists rely, in varying degrees, on positivistic and constructivist principles.

At the risk of diminishing the credibility of family history research as an empirical practice, there is something to be said for the workings and creativities of imagination. While an active imagination is commonly acknowledged as an effective tool for locating ancestors in time and place, it is not exercised by everyone in exactly the same manner. Without disparaging the approaches taken by Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas, Isabelle's approach to family history research is an exceptional case of the "genealogical imagination" (Nash, 2002, p. 41). She explains that the disparate sources of documentary evidence obtained from her research afford opportunities to "develop the character of a person, a description of the person, what they did in life, and how they got here". Owing to her interactions with books, records, documents, and letters, Isabelle tells of bringing her ancestors back to life by way of "putting a body, a face to a person", and consequently "you make a human being out of the person, [and] you make them part of you". Her imagination is a means by which to envision herself at once as standing in the shoes of both an ancestor and a storyteller, with the latter observing the performances of her ancestors and "building up a history of them in [a] story fashion". Even if she is the only amateur genealogist of the four to be forthright about the "alive-dead" ancestors who vividly populate her imagination, Isabelle shares with Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas a profound appreciation for all that is learned about their ancestors' lives and experiences.

Madeleine praises family history research for allowing her "to discover who the people were", and because of that, "it gives you a much better appreciation of the people who came before". Patrick divulges that while "there is a fair bit of inferring from the information" and data collected about his ancestors, outside of the domain of

accumulating proven “facts” and accurate “truths” is something which “makes you realize that other generations had their ups and downs, their successes and their triumphs and their failures”. Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas would concede that appreciations of their ancestors derive mainly from learning about what they experienced in the course of living their lives. Experiences of immigration, emigration, war, labour, decision-making, cultural assimilation, political strife, and economic hardship are just a few of the central themes that engage their interests. In addition, the many pains, pleasures, achievements, and adversities diffused within family history narratives give rise to emotions of not only admiration and pride, but also of empathy. The “trials” and “tribulations” associated with living in the ancestral past are identified by Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas as markedly different from experiences of their own personal pasts. It is as if they consider their personal pasts to be more stable and secure than the ancestral past; or to make use of the words of Cannell (2011): “life was often harder for [ancestors] than it is for their descendants” (p. 472). And so by appreciating “what they did, (and) why they did it, and how they did it”, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Thomas credit their ancestors for forging a path to the quality of life that they enjoy in the present:

So, you look at an evolving of the culture, of the history, of the opportunities that we have compared to what they were many years ago....It’s all part and parcel of developing an appreciation of who the people were before you, and that’s what genealogy should be, not dates, but their personalities, the culture, and what they had to suffer. [Isabelle]

I think really it doesn’t matter much what the names are, it’s who they were and what happened to them....it’s what happened to them on the way down to me....It’s just that I guess I certainly appreciate what all these people experienced, and what it has allowed me to do in the course of my life. [Madeleine]

I think it’s important for the current generation to know the sacrifices, the risks, the gambles, the choices that they (the ancestors) made to make the current generation’s life quite a bit easier than the last. And, you know, what I related to that is, it’s, you have to realize that luckily some of the things that you get are because of your past. [Thomas]

Understanding the history of a family is sustained by a process of learning about the people, places, times, and events that inform the conditions or circumstances of ancestors’ lives in the past. “It’s something for me, I think, to better myself because I’m learning about different cultures and times, and you know, sort of like a self-education

thing” voices Thomas. In collecting detailed information on ancestors’ lives and experiences, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick imaginatively locate and situate their ancestors within several intertwining narratives of sociohistorical context (i.e., local, regional, national, and global). Furthermore, the four amateur genealogists vary with respect to how each juxtaposes these multiple layers of historical context. Nearly all of the stories told about ancestors are interpretations, historicizations, and contextualizations of lives that were previously unknown and empty of meaning. Such stories facilitate intersections between biography, history, and society in ways which are redolent of Mills’ (1959) sociological imagination (see Hackstaff, 2010, for genealogy and the sociological imagination). Once again, without intending to stress any categorical differences in approach from participant to participant, Patrick’s approach to family history research as a trained historian presents a fitting summation of these intersections:

How did things get to be the way they are? Which is all part of what historic research is all about....(But) it’s taking that historical research ethos and applying it to family research....I think, what you should be doing in family history research is understanding the milieu of various generations. What experiences did they go through? What might have had an influence on their lives?....Oh, I’m not looking for, I’m just looking for an understanding of past people and the social, economic, and political surrounding at the time. You know, it’s more from a historic research point of view, I think, than trying to trace myself back to one of the sons of Adam or something, or a king or whatever.

Genealogy and family history research are resources through which connections to ancestors can be (re)formed (Lambert, 1996; Yakel, 2004). Similar to the “correspondents” in a study by Kramer (2011), the four participants in this research study “describe a sense of being connected to their (dead) ancestors in different ways” (p. 385). To Thomas, family history research is about continued efforts to form emotional connections, “and those connections are maybe connections to bring back the past and to try to help those memories so that they’re not totally gone”. Thomas’ narrative focuses greatly on a need to construct the stories and conserve the memories that were not “as clearly left” or “passed down” to him by preceding generations. This type of research makes it possible to “relate” to a “contact in the past”, and it also enables him to figuratively “reach out to the past” and to “those people who are no longer here” in order to try and “feel a connection”. Alternatively, Madeleine describes having met many living people whom she “never knew existed” and whose ancestors, at some point in the

course of history, “connected” to her family tree. She considers these people to be “[her] family too” because even though “they’ve come down one route and you’ve come down another...you [all] still have this inheritance in common”. Discovering connections with the living, as opposed to the dead, has “added an aspect” to Madeleine’s life, an aspect that brings “satisfaction”, creates affiliations with a “larger family”, and simply “makes life interesting”.

Patrick and Isabelle assert that the connections formed with some, and not all, ancestors facilitate understandings of their personal identities. In two decades of conducting family history research, Patrick has been able to gather a sense of “all those forces that go behind forming who you are”, as well as some clarity in response to questions like: “how did I get here...[and] how did I get to be this way?” The forces to which Patrick refers as forming his personal identity are considered to be a blend of the social and the genetic. But he clearly privileges the genetic, and this bias may be tied to his use of DNA technology for tracing lineages and establishing “relatedness” (Carsten, 2000, p. 700). For instance, Patrick’s rationale for becoming an historian is portrayed as being part of a “sequence” in which a certain trait (viz., an interest in history) was “passed on” from his mother and maternal grandfather. Much in the same way that Patrick recognizes the importance of genetics for “build[ing] the individual”, Isabelle interprets “the build-up” of her personal identity as stemming from an awareness of what “makes up [her] genes” and where “some of [her] genes come from”. Understandings of personal identity as constituted by a biological inheritance from preceding generations ground Patrick’s and Isabelle’s locating of a sense of self. The way in which they make sense of themselves as, at least in part, an outcome of inherited traits or characteristics is indicative of a cultural belief in genetic networks of kinship. That is, they pull from a discourse of “biological knowledge....whereby [selves and] identities...are instilled with a timeless, immutable essence that inheres in ‘nature’” (Hackstaff, 2010, p. 663). Upon revealing some of her biological inheritances through family history research, Isabelle gains insight into the generations of family, kin, and ancestors who, in some way, have reproduced intangible parts of themselves in both her and her daughter:

...once you’ve started doing genealogy and you start putting it together, not in black and white, not in ink and paper, you end up with people. It’s these people that actually make

you who you are. It's hard to say that, but I come back to the idea of yesterday, to today, to tomorrow, they all reflect on one another. They all become one. Who my daughter is, is part of me. You look and you say, 'Oh yes, I see me in her.' Well how many 'mes' are back beyond, you know, the various generations: the strengths, the weaknesses?

Isabelle is unique among the storytellers in this study for a proclaimed sensitivity to the personalities of her ancestors. In developing the “character” or “personality” of a selected ancestor, Isabelle can choose to locate any personality or character trait (e.g., “a sense of strength”) that she believes may affirm her personal identity. This “sensitive” discerning of traits plays right into the creativity of her imagination, especially given the “ultimately unverifiable nature of many inferences about ancestors’ personalities and values” (Lambert, 2006, p. 318). Despite the obvious constraints of verifying inheritances of traits and values, Isabelle and Madeleine are not discouraged from attributing a personal and familial significance to them. Madeleine comes to think that her former occupation as a teacher is linked to the “same frame of mind or outlook” of her mother and maternal grandmother who were also teachers. She trusts this “great appreciation for education” is “reflective of the values of the family” and the Scottish culture, and as a result, “it sort of explains why it’s been important” to her personal identity. Isabelle suspects that the career path she chose to follow in her life emanates from a succession of ancestors who had been “so determined to do things” with their lives. The merits of living determinedly are one set of core family values that Isabelle perceives as having “reflected on [her] life” and what she did “opportunity-wise”. To construct a family history narrative without the inheritances of traits and values, even if such attributes are “true...or not true”, makes Isabelle feel as though she would be dispossessed of the ancestors “that eventually helped to make you or your family what and who they are”.

Rather than be preoccupied with the possibilities of deducing shared ancestral traits, Thomas draws on family history to make sense of the interconnections between three generations of his family: his parents’ generation, his generation, and his children’s generation. Experiences in his father’s life, in particular, are a highly important point of reference for understanding the “morals and values” (e.g., altruism, reciprocation, and financial prudence) that have influenced Thomas’ life and the lives of his two children. While Thomas looks to stories of his parents’ lives as a framework “to figure out” or

locate his sense of self and identity, he professes to be unsure how generations beyond that of his parents' influence who he understands himself to be:

And so, I think it's my parents' values that are part of me....Now is it just from that generation? Is it the generation before, I don't know. So are you talking genealogy or are you talking about just parental values? Does it all come down the same chute?...I don't know if it [all] went beyond my father because I don't really know too much about what he picked up from his parents because of his not talking about it.

Like Thomas, Madeleine ponders the sources from which her parents' values originated. What is more intriguing is that she also credits her parents with having made the most significant "contribution" to her sense of self and identity. There is little to disagree with in terms of the fundamentality of parents in Madeleine's and Thomas' identity formations. Besides parents, it is conspicuous that the relationship between identity and social interactions with ancestors—who exist as "symbolic" (Lambert, 2006, p. 318) actors or characters in stories—can be difficult to convey. It is not clear how Madeleine and Thomas, together with Patrick and Isabelle, enter into social exchanges with ancestors who are evidently incapable of reciprocal interaction. Moreover, the role of nonliving ancestors as symbolic actors in their social worlds is particularly challenging to describe and analyze. All four amateur genealogists may not even be mindful of their acts to imaginatively endow ancestors with a self, and so, justifiably, there is no easy way for them to speak to identities formed as a product of these interactions. Instead, Thomas and Madeleine locate themselves as the children of parents whose identities were formed from their own parents' identities. To illustrate this perspective, Madeleine delivers an account of her identity as formed from a family history that over time channelled into her parents' identities:

...like my parents, the kind of people they were, the experiences they had, I would think were more important in my formation, in the kind of person I am. But again all their history feeds into what they were.

More recent generations of parents, as well as grandparents, have unquestionably "left their mark, so to speak" (Smart, 2007, p. 45) on this contemporary generation of amateur genealogists. From here it becomes even more evident that the inheritances left by recent generations (viz., in contrast to distant ancestral generations) are something of



which Thomas, Madeleine, Isabelle, and Patrick can easily distinguish. Each storyteller, in his or her own distinct way, attaches a significant degree of credence to an idea that every consecutive generation imparts itself onto the next. As a whole, their narratives communicate beliefs in a chain of influence by which each ancestral generation “passes down” elements (e.g., genetic traits, character traits, morals, values, etc.) of their lives to a succeeding generation. This chain of influence, while constructed on the basis of interpretation and historical evidence, evokes for Patrick a feeling of being “part of a very long process....[or a] trail that traces all the way back” to the ancestral past:

...again, there are so many things that are passed down from generation to generation and, well part of, you know, I'm the result of all these different influences in life, and again they're family influences, outside influences, things that you pick up from friends and neighbours and that sort of thing. It just helps you maybe understand where you're at or who you are, why you do what you do, and so on.

Patrick's understandings of himself as the “result” of influences, both from within and outside the family, demonstrate that preceding generations of family, kin, and ancestors still extend their “reach” (Kramer, 2011, p. 385) to the present. This way of thinking is furthered by Thomas when he proclaims: “we are all a composite of those before us”. Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle strive to make explicit the belief that, in some ways, they consider themselves to be the manifestation of generations past. In that sense, these three individuals conceive of family history research as providing sufficient opportunities for a “finding of oneself in [preceding generations] and [preceding generations] in oneself” (Basu, 2007, p. 219). Yet only Patrick is adamant to clarify that, although family history research offers such affirmation, it is not practiced deliberately for “finding” himself. In reducing the importance of family history research for self-discovery, he proposes that it is a means for “self-analysis”:

No, it's not really finding myself, no. It's basically saying, almost self-analysis, I mean, saying, how did I get here?...I mean, to some extent, it's an understanding of, say, my mother's genealogical background and my father's genealogical background, and it makes me in later life understand, well, why was dad the way he was? Why was mom the way she was? Where did mom's interest in history come from? What about dad's skills in carpentry and incredible sense of humour, and that sort of thing. And so, you start to understand those things better. But it's not the type of thing that I'll sit and dwell on for hours. It's almost the more you learn the more you understand, the more it becomes almost a spontaneous understanding of why things did this, that, and the other thing.

Such reflections on the meaningfulness of family history research establish its relevance as an endeavour into self-understanding, and not as a method for discovering the self. Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick are always combining fragments of information in an attempt to give some kind of coherence to stories of their ancestors and the broader family history narrative. In doing so, their self-understandings are continuously negotiating between the communalities (similarities) and individualities (differences) that separate or connect their generation to preceding generations (Erben, 1991). Interestingly enough, the communalities between preceding and contemporary generations, in excess of the individualities, are what these storytellers prefer to accentuate.

As “the field of the historical” (Saar, 2002, p. 233) expands with every construction of a family history narrative, the depth of this narrative too becomes less shallow. Madeleine gathers that an understanding of her family history provides “a sort of framework which you fit into where you’ve come from”. The framework in which Madeleine positions herself is historical (Fivush et al., 2008), and it endows her with a sense of self that is embedded in a family history. It cannot be said that Madeleine, Thomas, Isabelle, and Patrick use the same word(s) to convey their embeddedness in a family history, but their narratives do express this notion of a “temporally extended self” (Fivush et al., 2008, p. 132). A temporally extended self, for them, represents an understanding of the self as emerging from the continuity formed between a personal present and a familial (or ancestral) past. In other words, it is a resituating of the self—thereby extending it in historical time—so that its formation begins not at birth, “but with [its] ancestors” (Kramer, 2011, p. 382).

A family history narrative supplies a broad temporal framework within which to embed not only a sense of self, but also a personal history narrative. The former narrative, composed of stories of the experiences of preceding generations from the familial past, can inform understandings of the latter narrative, which comprises stories of experiences from the personal past. Thus, understandings of preceding generations’ experiences are thought to shape the way in which present-day generations interpret their own past experiences (Fivush et al., 2008). It ought to be apparent by now that Madeleine, Thomas, Isabelle, and Patrick are seeking to enrich their understandings of the experiences of

preceding generations by (re)constructing stories through family history research. On the one hand, these understandings can be utilized as an evaluative tool for interpreting their past experiences. On the other hand, understandings of preceding generations' experiences may have very little of an influence on how they interpret their past experiences. Since both of these alternatives are conceivable, each requires a concise elaboration.

The experiences of women throughout history are treated with the utmost consideration in Isabelle's research. She is especially impacted by the dominant presence of men in historical records, in contrast to the near-complete absence of women. When confronted with the opportunity to keep her maiden name, Isabelle knew that by choosing to maintain this name her "identity" would, unlike the women who preceded her, continue to endure. In bringing this experience to the fore, Isabelle's sense of self as a woman is understood to be located in an "evolution [of women]...through years of such primitive living and hardship...and develop[ing] professionally....over time". Isabelle sketches, in broad strokes, an understanding of the experiences of distant generations of women who she believes had an influence on her past. What is also significant is that Isabelle legitimates her experiences as a professionally educated woman to be an outcome of her ancestors' experiences, even though these ancestors' experiences may or may not have been known to her at the time.

Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas are less articulate than Isabelle with regard to how understandings of distant generations of ancestors' experiences shape interpretations of their past experiences. The experiences of distant ancestral generations, when unearthed in family history research, often fall within the purview of Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas. However, these individuals do not always interpret experiences from their personal pasts directly in the context of experiences from the ancestral past. Rather, they use stories of their parents' generation, and occasionally their grandparents' generation, to negotiate between experiences from the personal past and the ancestral past. For example, in telling about the experiences of ancestors who over centuries would continually "switch religions", Patrick supposes this "ingrained (200 year old) thing" could explain why his parents "never went to church", and consequently why he does not attend church either.

It is possible that while the experiences of preceding generations may be relevant for connecting with “something more beyond just you”, as Thomas says, they can also be acknowledged as having little-to-no influence on understandings of their own past experiences. To Isabelle, what has happened in her personal past cannot be changed or undone by what she reveals about her ancestors’ experiences:

I don’t really think they (my ancestors) made me look at my past differently, because I think you are responsible for your past, and it isn’t an ancestor that is involved in your past up to your present. I think it’s more of, when you look at these people and you admire most of them for what they’ve been, fine, but it didn’t reflect on my life except the odd, as I said, professional aspect.

In Patrick’s case, he rationalizes that because he understands the historical “background” or “pattern” leading up to his personal past, there is nothing which “blindsides”, “surprises”, or changes his understandings of this past. With Madeleine, she believes that understanding the experiences of preceding generations “just sort of expands who [she is]”. And, despite feeling historically expanded, Madeleine cannot identify specific experiences which may have influenced her personal past:

Because I started it (genealogy) late [in life], I don’t think it’s made an awful lot of difference in who I am because I think basically I was pretty well formed by the time I got into doing this. But it certainly complimented, it’s added to my life I would say....there’s so many people who you’re descended from, that it’s hard to pick out just what influence it would have had [on me]. So I don’t think on awful lot....And, it’s all been a revelation I think I could say, but I don’t think it has changed how I view life...

As Madeleine realizes just how far back her ancestors’ lives extend, she finds difficulty in choosing an ancestor who may have been implicated in her experiences of the past. Madeleine and Patrick admit to not thinking “very much” or reflecting “deeply about” their past experiences. It would appear almost as if Patrick and Madeleine, coupled with Thomas, view the experiences of ancestral generations as too distant to be influential in the context of understanding their own personal pasts.

Excavating the depths of the ancestral past in order to locate a sense of self is much more complex than simply recognizing the similarities and identifying the differences—in genes, traits, morals, values, identities, and experiences—within preceding generations of family, kin, and ancestors. The complexity itself derives from

this interpretation that locating a sense of self, on an intergenerational basis, seems to be entangled in a negotiation of the social and the inherited. Traditional conceptualizations of the self conceive of it as being constructed by, and located in, the social world. When the terminology of biological determinism is invoked, as it is by some of the participants here, the self can also be informed by, and located in, inheritances. Reminiscent of the dualism of nature and nurture, the social and the inherited come together to form understandings of the self, but neither is fully determinative of the self. Or to put it in somewhat simpler terms, the social and the inherited only produce part of who Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas are. Within the overall frame of self-understanding, Isabelle, Patrick, Madeleine, and Thomas still form a sense of self that is personalistic or idiosyncratic. No matter how much each individual claims to be socially and biologically determined, they all regard themselves as an element of their own unique time and place in history.

### **Intersections of Genealogy and the Serious Leisure Perspective**

For the purposes of clarity, it is imperative to restate that the aim of this research study is not to gather evidence which would confirm a classification of genealogy as serious leisure—thereby eliminating the possibility of an alternative classification. To set out and qualify genealogy as serious leisure, even though competing classifications exist (viz., as either project-based leisure or serious leisure), is already limited by the employed method, the sample size, and the collected data. Bearing these limitations in mind, there are worthwhile insights to be gained by facilitating an intersection between the serious leisure perspective (SLP) and the narratives constructed by Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas. These insights open up a pathway into the social world of amateur genealogists, yet they do not aim to depict the “reality” of genealogy. Notwithstanding studies (e.g., Fulton, 2009; Horne, 2002) which have made some features of this social world intelligible, many other features are still in need of being rendered less abstract. Only those intersections that emerged from the participants’ narratives are addressed herein.

**Time and time commitment.** Even when sharing the same core leisure engagement, the amount of time (i.e., minutes, hours, days, etc.) one individual spends on this engagement is generally quite different from that of another individual. Hence, it is not entirely inconceivable that Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas would spend varying amounts of time on their leisure engagements of genealogy. All four storytellers, with the exception of Patrick, have trouble accurately reporting the quantity of time they spend, on average, engaging in genealogy. Patrick, as the only non-retired participant in this group, accounts for his time commitment to genealogy in the following way:

It's done on spare time and weekends, and it's not something where, you know, I'm burning the midnight oil doing genealogical crap. It's adding a little bit to it at a time. Sometimes I'll skip it altogether for a few weeks, unless I get a question from someone. Those I'll answer right away. Then every once in a while, I'll be stirred on.... Three hours a week would be fairly natural unless I hit some new source that is going to really occupy my time. Then I'll spend considerably more time [on it].

Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas set their own discretionary time commitments with respect to leisure engagements of genealogy, and only rarely are these time commitments imposed upon them by others. “There really isn’t a timeline” with genealogy, divulges Thomas, and because “nobody’s really pushing you anywhere....you can go wherever you want.” That is to say, he perceives himself as more or less free to “take it all in course, all in due time”. As a retiree, Thomas feels that he has been given a “void” of time with which to “fill”. Confronted with many options for a leisure engagement, he gathers that genealogy is a “productive”, and perhaps “more socially acceptable”, use of his time—particularly when compared with leisure engagements of a casual variety (i.e., television watching, entertainment, and play). By no means, though, is genealogy the only available option for the distribution of Thomas’ time and energy:

Being the kind of person I am, which is kind of hyper-active, I would be doing something. I think it would be more history related, planning trip related.... But I think if there wasn’t something like that, [then] maybe volunteering might be a bigger part of my life, in the community. But I can see myself volunteering through the genealogy part as well. There would be something to fill that time, genealogy just happened to fill it.

It is worth pointing out that the amount of time each individual currently devotes to a leisure engagement of genealogy has not been consistent over the years. In

transitioning through the phases of their research, Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas have had to invest differing amounts of time. When Madeleine first started to familiarize herself with the tools available for conducting research, she tells of spending very little time on genealogy. It was not until the purchase of a home computer that, with a “concrete...framework” in place, she would spend “more time on genealogy”. With contrast to a story told by Patrick, he describes an earlier point in his research when he was spending “a lot of [his] spare time” digitizing church records from microfilm reels. After years of processing this information and building his database, Patrick is now “just filling in little gaps here and there”.

One of the foremost contributors to this inconsistency in engagement can be the competing time commitments of other social institutions (e.g., work, community, and religion). In the first years of her involvement with genealogy, Isabelle was obliged to set aside this leisure engagement due to the demands placed on her time by her daughter, stepson, and parents:

For a long while I was very serious in working in genealogy. I broke my one side down to United Empire Loyalists and went right back down to Connecticut. Then I was off for a bit. Sometimes I have other family obligations....So it wasn't constant, but it's always [been] there....My husband had a son and I had a daughter, and they were going through their adolescent lives. It was a busy life because I was involved not just in teaching but in some of the extra-curricular activities too. That was then....I had my parents for a while to look after. Then I was able to sneak in time. But it was, for a while, touch and go.

It was not always a case that Isabelle had insufficient time to devote to her leisure engagements of genealogy; rather it was more a case of making sure these engagements did not conflict with her familial duties. Thomas echoes a similar sentiment: “the living are more important than the people who aren't here....[and so] taking care of the living is more important than delving into this”. With this assertion, Thomas recognizes that leisure engagements of genealogy are susceptible to bordering on the “uncontrollable” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 70). To avoid this type of outcome from happening, he constantly reminds himself to negotiate the balance between his leisure engagements and the obligations of everyday life:

I think I have to be cognizant of the fact that I can't be obsessed to the point that the relationship with my wife is put at a back seat. In other words, you know, like: 'I'm doing this whether you want me to do it or not.'

The lack of a systematic routine for engaging in genealogy would appear to separate it from other serious leisure activities which, generally speaking, consume time “on a regular basis” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 69). However, no principle in the SLP insists that regular or routine engagement signifies serious leisure. This is expected to be the case because many leisure careers follow a trajectory of stages, and the time committed in one stage may not be of the same amount as the stage that precedes or follows. Moreover, each stage of a leisure career can encounter special contingencies and competing institutional demands, thereby influencing allotments of time and commitment. Although previously mentioned in brief, it is important enough to reference the phases through which amateur genealogists pass as potentially having application to the stages of a leisure career. These phases, on the other hand, are imprecise and advance differently for Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas (see Duff & Johnson, 2003, for evidence on the phases of family history research for professional genealogists).

**Leisure over the long-term: Doldrums, challenges, and finalities.** The degree to which Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas have been involved with leisure engagements of genealogy ranges from four to 40 years. Over the course of these involvements, genealogy has not been a steady source of leisure—especially for those individuals who have been engaged the longest, like Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick—but it has always managed to linger. It is distinctly this pattern of infrequency that blurs the lines between genealogy as serious leisure or project-based leisure. The latter is not intended to continue into the future (Stebbins, 2005), and yet, with the exclusion of Thomas, there is good reason to believe that, ever since they initiated their engagements, genealogy has followed Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick well into the future. Even still, it is the infrequency of leisure engagements of genealogy, as they occur over the long-term, which necessitates some form of explanation. “Kind of like many other pursuits, it kind of comes in waves” discloses Patrick, “sometimes you’ll move in big leaps and



sometimes you can go years without getting any new (piece of) information”. Isabelle elaborates further:

I mean you get a spurt. Somebody will say something, and somebody will call you. I mentioned just now, all of a sudden my grandson is interested in the War of 1812. And I hadn't been thinking about that side for ages. I realize I had a book and I thought I better read it. So there was a spurt there....[and] you'll have somebody write a letter, and not so much now when you've got the Internet and things like that. At one time when I first started this, it would be a phone call, or a letter, or somebody, or some connection, and off I'd go on a spurt to find that.

A “spurt” is her way of communicating that, after interstitial periods of inactivity (i.e., doldrums), she can be spurred on to explore a new set of connections and conundrums. There is no telling how long these doldrums may last. Patrick remembers having experienced “dry periods of three or four years”, and then, “all of a sudden something comes along that opens up a whole floodgate of new avenues of inquiry”. It is not necessarily that genealogy loses its essence during doldrums, or that Patrick and Isabelle feel a sense of obligation to return to their leisure engagements of genealogy after an elapsed period of time. Sometimes it requires setting a new goal, receiving an appeal for support, overcoming a major limitation, or discovering a new source of information to restore their involvements.

In family history research, the obstacles and challenges of scarce and incomplete information, and the occasional dead end or “brick wall” (Timothy & Guelke, 2008, p. 8), are all too common. Similar in a way to the adversities faced by their ancestors, Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas have encountered numerous adverse situations in which their searches for evidence turn up nothing. They welcome the challenge, even though from time to time it may feel like a laborious undertaking. Thomas perceives it not as “a total waste of time” when confronted with the complications of information seeking. He knows well that, with perseverance, there is the possibility that “finding nothing...[may lead to] finding something”. For example, after “two or three months on and off”, and “hundreds upon hundreds of pages of militia records”, Thomas delights in having finally “proved” his 4<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather fought in the War of 1812. He takes pleasure in this accomplishment because its rewards (viz., these “carrots” to which he refers) of self-gratification and self-expression compensate for the costs (e.g., disappointment and

frustration) endured along the way. Such rewards comprise a major part of the motivational basis for experiencing fulfillment in leisure engagements of genealogy (Stebbins, 2005).

While not demanding of a long-term commitment, involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy can encourage personal commitment in the long-term. Once Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas first became involved, and started to collect information from a variety of different sources, they eventually found themselves to be committed to a project with no conclusive finality. “You’re never finished genealogy”, declares Isabelle, “it’s ongoing....and you can always add to it”. This notion of the infinitude of genealogy is often cited by amateur genealogists, as the search for one piece of information typically leads them to deeper probing and continuous searches for additional information (Fulton, 2009; Yakel, 2004). “It’s sort of one thing leads to another I guess is the way it works”, expresses Madeleine. In spite of the infinite possibilities that family history research offers, not every amateur genealogist feels obliged or committed to take them up. Conversely, at a time when Thomas began to foresee the research on his paternal ancestors reaching a climax, he reckoned that, rather than discontinue the project, he would commit himself to prolonging his leisure engagements:

I was interested enough when I got my UEL (United Empire Loyalists) certificate, I cooled off on my paternal side of the family. And my wife said, ‘Well, I’d like to know more about my family’. Okay, so I started to work at it and I had my father-in-law as a resource but he didn’t know a whole lot....So that was kind of interesting because, as I said, my paternal side, a lot of it was done. But the other side, it wasn’t done. I was doing it.

Choices of whether or not to commit to genealogy appear to be made at the discretion of the individual. Unless commitment is attached to a community, and a sense of duty to others within this community (e.g., an online genealogical community or a local genealogical society), personal commitments to genealogy may otherwise be established on the basis of negotiation. As long as genealogy continues to be a meaningful leisure engagement, over and above the challenges and tensions it presents, there does not seem to be any fundamental reason why it cannot foster a commitment. It

is presumed, however, that this level of commitment to genealogy may wax and wane over the long-term.

Like many creative undertakings of project-based leisure, there is this strong sense that leisure engagements of genealogy can be “terminated at will” (Stebbins, 2005, p. 3). On the grounds of their own volition, or at the behest of external forces, Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas have the option of deciding to do so. And, if carried out, there are not likely to be any social penalties faced as a consequence. But instead of taking action to quit their leisure engagements of genealogy, each individual argues against such actions. “I wouldn’t say genealogy is the be-all and end-all of what I do”, reveals Madeleine, but “I don’t see [quitting it] in the near future”. Such views are in line with Patrick and Thomas, who, by minimizing the importance of genealogy in everyday life, also emphasize their reluctance to cease engaging in it:

I don’t think there would be a huge gap in my life without it. I thought about it and analyzed it and all that sort of thing, and you say, well, you know, ‘Why do I do this?’....[But] no, that’s like saying would I quit historic research, or you know, reading or whatever....So it’s something....I’ll probably pursue a little more post-retirement, when I’ve got a little more time to devote to it, along with other things like wood-working and some of my other hobbies. [Patrick]

If I woke up tomorrow and all of a sudden I didn’t do this for two years, it wouldn’t matter....I could see it swell, but I can’t see quitting it....Postponing it, yes....[and] maybe the relative importance will decrease or peak in value. But I think it will always be something there because there is always another generation to explore. There is always another connection. [Thomas]

Motivations to continue with leisure engagements of genealogy are, in keeping with Stebbins’ (1992) “exchange framework” (p. 93), to be interpreted as the consequence of rewards outweighing costs. Isabelle, Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas would probably agree that genealogy delivers rewards and beneficial outcomes which surpass its costs and constraints. What is more, the implications of genealogy for understanding self and identity are enough to solidify its value as a personally meaningful leisure engagement. Yet, relative to other forms of leisure in which they regularly engage, genealogy does not always retain its value in the everyday lives of Madeleine, Patrick, and Thomas. These appraisals of genealogy seem logical given that the three amateur genealogists cannot be expected to experience a leisure engagement of genealogy for

every day of their lives. Regardless, genealogy facilitates experiences of leisure over the long-term, and it is the meanings ascribed to such leisure experiences that motivate Isabelle, in particular, to ensure genealogy remains an integral part of her life:

I think genealogy is no more than a step away from my life at any time. There is everyday life and something will trigger it....If I didn't have that (genealogy) to do, I would find my life very dull....It's absorbing; it's a way of life...

**Sharing of skills, knowledge, and experience.** Even though genealogy is primarily a solitary or individualistic leisure engagement, these four individuals have a strong social network of family, friends, relatives, and communities with whom they share their skills, knowledge, and experience. The range of experience for the amateur genealogists in this study extends from less than half a decade to four decades. This discrepancy in experience may be a marker of difference in terms of the skills and knowledge possessed by Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine. Put another way, as the pair with the least amount of experience (viz., relative to the former pair), Thomas and Madeleine are content to acknowledge that their skills and knowledge are in the phases of being further developed. They have benefited in the past, and continue to benefit, from the assistance of amateur genealogists like Patrick and Isabelle, who hold a breadth of experiential skills and knowledge (e.g., research, technical, and information). Nonetheless, it is not necessarily the level of experience that matters, since it is communicated by some of the participants that amateur genealogists can distinguish themselves from other amateur genealogists in a multiplicity of ways. What matters then is the value of skills and knowledge, as well as their allocation and expression.

Aside from concerns related to information seeking, Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine speak about the skills required to build, manage, and maintain their family history collections. Each has amassed a personal archive of materials (e.g., records, documents, photographs, stories, and artefacts) that, when compared, varies in overall size and scope. Patrick differentiates himself from Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine by being the only amateur genealogist to have an entirely electronic database. The other three arrange their materials in boxes, binders, and family tree software programs. They prefer this particular arrangement due to the ease with which materials can be edited, controlled, and transported. Patrick, on the contrary, favours a digital format for the

reason that it is easy to administer, access, and share with others via the Internet. Not only does it require significant personal effort to steadily build a family history collection over time, but it also takes considerable skill to ensure proper management and maintenance. “A major problem” Madeleine faces on a regular basis is bringing order to what she views as a very disorderly collection. Both Isabelle and Thomas hint at a feeling of discontent with the existing state of their collections, and accordingly, they assert their intentions to rework them into something more up-to-date (e.g., digital) and manageable (e.g., a book). However sophisticated, (dis)organized, and comprehensive a family history collection may be, it is not necessarily the collection itself that holds the most meaning for these amateur genealogists. Undoubtedly it is the materials contained within such collections—from primary source documents and familial possessions to written family stories and biographies—that possess a “special” meaning (see Lambert, 2006, for the meaning of materials as “instruments of memory”). A treaty from the 1720s with an ancestor’s signature, a putty knife owned by his maternal great-uncle, and a certain species of flowering vines are just a few ancestral relics with which Thomas shares a profound bond.

As the self-proclaimed carrier of a wealth of knowledge, Patrick is enthusiastic to discuss how he assists fellow amateur genealogists using the “research skills [he has] developed, not only as an historian, but also [from] getting seriously into genealogy”. He claims receiving email “questions from around the world about genealogy”, and “normally with the resources at [his] fingertips”, Patrick either offers a “direct answer”, finds information, or “at least steer[s] them in the right direction”. Sharing knowledge is one of Patrick’s “great joys”, and because it brings him “a certain satisfaction”, he is resolved to “not charge anything” for his services. The rationale behind this decision is tied to an ethos in the genealogical community of “reciprocal altruism” (Fulton, 2009, p. 756). Patrick gives an explanation of the significance of this tacit ethos:

I have a good understanding, a good knowledge of the resources that are out there. I keep very current....So I can quickly find information for people....[and then] when they’re looking for their own people, because I have helped them out, they reciprocate....Again, it sort of builds up this community of people that can help me with my research. It extends the net, so that any information comes to me, and some of it is related, and some of it isn’t.

The relationship between helpfulness and sharing is a subtle but recurrent thread in the participants' narratives. Given the undeniable importance of the Internet as a medium for communication, social support, and information dissemination (Fulton, 2009), it is not at all unusual that Patrick makes use of the Internet to share his knowledge and skills. In addition to the Internet, Isabelle opts to share her knowledge and skills by way of writing and volunteering. Upon her retirement from teaching, Isabelle played an influential role in establishing a genealogy room at her local public library. "For all those years" following its establishment, she acted as a guide to visitors of this room, many of whom had been amateur genealogists. Though she now only volunteers when necessary, Isabelle is immensely pleased to have had the opportunity to impart her knowledge and experience in family history research to such a large quantity of visitors. On account of the helpfulness of people like Patrick and Isabelle, Thomas maintains that he is determined to "help other people learn about their pasts...because so many people have helped [him]".

The sharing of skills, knowledge, and experience is almost as valuable to these amateur genealogists as their acquisition. It does not come across as an unpleasant or burdensome obligation that inhibits the experience of leisure. Instead, sharing exemplifies the social norms of a genealogical community that gains a sense of gratification from helping to advance the research of others (Fulton, 2009). The support given and received over the years is one of the main reasons why Patrick and Isabelle want to entrust their family history collections to a larger community (i.e., online communities and the general public). Isabelle has gone as far as to incorporate this collection in her will, so as to "make sure it's in a secure place" at her local public library and not "in somebody's waste paper basket". Beyond the community itself, family and relatives are the next closest recipients of knowledge acquired from family history research. Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine inform of their persistent willingness to share family history knowledge with family and relatives (e.g., spouses, (grand-)children, siblings, and distant cousins) through expressions of leisure, such as conversation and storytelling. Albeit not all of these people show interest in learning their family histories, they are as supportive of genealogy as the many other forms of leisure in which Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine routinely engage. Furthermore, specific members of Patrick's, Thomas', and

Madeleine's families can expect to be the beneficiaries of their family history collections when the time comes for them to be passed on. A genuine concern is expressed by Patrick, Thomas, and Madeleine that if not documented and subsequently bequeathed to the family, historical knowledge may end up ultimately being "lost" and irretrievable.

There may be nothing more essential to these individuals than ensuring their family history collections are shared for generations to come. Such generations should not necessarily be delimited to the familial. Provided that these collections can serve an instructional and referential purpose, it is hoped that they may be accessed and appreciated by all succeeding generations. Although succeeding generations are not expected to derive the same meanings as the amateur genealogists who built them, it is crucial that they at least acknowledge collections of this nature, or otherwise risk being without tangible connections to their families' origins. Perspectives on the significance of informing succeeding generations about the ancestral past are presented by Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas:

I think maybe as you get closer to handing in your own dinner pail, you figure that you need to record this stuff for some reason for future generations....I think from a human being point of view sharing information is important. It's just a kind of civilized thing to do, and from an historian's perspective, that's crucial that information be passed on so that each subsequent generation will have more information than the last generation had. [Patrick]

It's giving, I guess, a basement to the building, and I think I've mentioned that analogy before....I think it's just a case of trying to make these people live for the generations that go on. They're living for me. [Isabelle]

I'd like to leave my children with something in a book or two. If they're interested, or if they're not interested, and maybe they won't lose it, so that another generation, if interested, can pick it up....And I hope I can leave something that will be a lot of knowledge for another generation, and, if they want to know, it'll be there for them. [Thomas]

**Genealogy and the liberal arts.** Genealogy is considered to be "hobbyist-like", which purports that it approximates "hobbyist activity" (Stebbins, 2005, p. 5), but still does not represent a hobby in and of itself. In order for it to be more like the hobbyist pursuits of serious leisure, it would appear that engagements of genealogy need to circumvent the adjectives associated with project-based leisure, such as "one-shot [or] occasional" (Stebbins, 2005, p. 2). The narratives of the four participants in this research

study have conveyed thus far that, although occurring at infrequent intervals, their leisure engagements of genealogy are “ongoing” (Stebbins, 2005, p. 5), or long-term, undertakings. What separates a long-term undertaking from a short-term one (*viz.*, in terms of time), however, is not clear at the present moment.

Learning was cited in previous sections as an experience that is concomitant with researching family history. This learning is highly personal, not just in the sense that amateur genealogists control the process, but also in the sense of the knowledge pursued. The knowledge pursued throughout the course of conducting family history research encompasses not only that which is requisite for facilitating this leisure engagement; but, additionally, it reflects the character of knowledge attained in liberal arts pursuits. This is neither a specialized knowledge nor a knowledge acquired as the means for involvement. Instead, it is a broad, profound, and untechnical knowledge acquired “for its own sake” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 8). As such, acquisitions of this knowledge are approached by Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine in an active (*i.e.*, deliberate searches), rather than a passive (*i.e.*, incidental searches), manner. That is, although inviting of information sent by external sources, they take the initiative and responsibility to define their own pursuits of knowledge.

A compelling point to make regarding family history knowledge is that it compounds different forms (*e.g.*, inherited knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge). Characterizations of family history knowledge by Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine prior to their involvement with genealogy suggest that each individual was motivated to enhance an established stock of knowledge. The family history knowledge of which they actively sought, and continue to seek, is comprehensive and varied. It expands and intensifies according to the evolving of information needs and the generating of new research goals or objectives. It also takes considerable time to grasp and assemble the particulars of this knowledge, as well as to incorporate it into an existing knowledge base. The sources from which family history knowledge may be acquired are numerous and imperfect. Reading, especially works of historical fiction, is singled out by Isabelle and Thomas as a pleasurable way of becoming knowledgeable about, and collecting information on, their family histories. In drawing a comparison between genealogy and collecting, Patrick reasons that the pursuit of



knowledge can be as significant as—if not more significant than—the nature of knowledge itself:

And in a way, it's like a collector who collects things. You know if you collect baseball cards and you're missing that 1932 Mickey Mantle, well, I don't know if Mickey Mantle was playing then (chuckle). And all of a sudden, there it is. You add it to your collection and what a thrill that must be. Or someone who collects rocks or someone who is into bird watching and they see that, you know, rare tufted titmouse or something, they have checked off in their bird's list. It may be kind of like that. I don't know. I mean, research is often that way I think. Historic research is a thirst to know, but, in a way, it's kind of collecting stuff as well: collecting information, collecting facts, and putting things together somehow.

There are understandings dispersed throughout society that family history knowledge equates self-knowledge, or knowledge of the self. In this view, the knowledge provided by family history research is intended to confront a privileged form of knowledge that amateur genealogists possess only in their private recesses. Terms like self-exploration and self-discovery are sometimes applied as a way to communicate the implicit promises of family history knowledge for recovering truths and authenticities of self and identity. Adopting such terms also implies that family history knowledge would determine whether self and identity are successfully recovered, or, remain lost and inauthentic. In light of what has been analyzed and interpreted until now, it should be noted that Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine have acquired, to some extent, a partial self-knowledge as a result of locating a sense of self. Acquiring self-knowledge is indeed embedded within a continual process of self-reflexivity, and for that reason, it is unlikely to be realized through family history research alone.

Rather than limit the meaning of family history knowledge to something that imparts truths and authenticities (Nash, 2002), it is perhaps more appropriate to conceive of this knowledge as implicit in ongoing processes of self-understanding (viz., an asking of questions like: How did I get to be who I am? Who do I want to be? What will I become?). Stories told by Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine argue that family history knowledge, when acquired, generally does not dislodge their understandings of self and identity. It is plausible, on the other hand, that they may be reluctant to structure their narratives in ways which would acknowledge experiences when the unknown and unexpected forced them to re-evaluate understandings of themselves and their identities.

Common-sense assumptions that amateur genealogists urgently need to know their origins so as to contend with a problematic sense of self and identity are not substantiated by these individuals' narratives. There are of course various things that, as Patrick says, some of them "thirst" to know in order to obtain a more comprehensive representation of their family histories. Yet, as Isabelle and Thomas insist, there are also many instances when they seek to know things without precisely knowing what it is that they would like to know. It is, then, not convincing that this *thirst* can be aligned with a *need* to know, as the latter creates an impression of questing for knowledge from which an individual has been unfairly deprived or denied. Such is certainly not the case among the storytellers investigated in this study.

Coinciding in many respects to an academic model of basic research, family history research is guided by methodical searches and a continuous formulation of questions. The course of research typically starts off with one or more key questions, after which it may mature into an unsystematic process of modifying extant questions, as well as creating new ones. The questions Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine attempt to answer are collectively aimed at addressing the obscurities that preclude them from better understanding their family histories. Thomas analogizes it all to "detective work", or "sleuthing" for Isabelle, which is to say that this kind of research allows for a challenging and "thrilling 'detective' style of engagement" (Mason, 2008, p. 36). Patrick takes this analogy a step further by incorporating the involvedness of puzzle-solving practices:

It's really like detective work, I suppose. I've often likened it to taking about 80 boxes of jigsaw puzzles, removing half of the pieces from each box and then just throwing all the pieces into one big tumbler, and there you go. There are missing pieces, and there will always be missing pieces....[but] if you get a piece to fit in, and if you can start to add to the puzzle, add to the completion of the puzzle, the resolution of the puzzle, it's kind of fun, you know. It's a bit uplifting.

The most glaring features of family history research, aside from the likenesses between genealogist and detective, are the thrills that materialize upon achieving an objective, answering a critical question, or making a long-awaited discovery. Thrills, or these "sharply exciting events and occasions that stand out in the minds of those who pursue [a leisure engagement]" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 15), are not expected to surface with

much frequency. When they do, it seems as though they are capable of satisfying needs and meeting expectations. Nearly all of the participants report “satisfaction” in reference to the emotions experienced after such thrills. Satisfaction is a very common, and nevertheless important, affective descriptor. It demonstrates that Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine not only enjoy the excitements of family history research, but they also benefit from affirmation of their identities as competent and diligent amateur genealogists. And thus, they are rewarded by a personal sense of accomplishment, which then may be used as an anchor for finding similar experiences in their prospective research endeavours.

Yet another dimension that adds insight into genealogy as a hobbyist-like pursuit of the liberal arts is the centrality of history. There can be little doubt that, in addition to personalizing the past (Lambert, 1996), history carries a personal and emotional resonance for Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine. What makes learning about history so enjoyable for them, outside of attaining beneficial outcomes, is arguably that the process of learning itself can be both personally and emotionally engaging. Engagements with history are inherently emotional, but not all can be fundamentally personal. Patrick confirms this observation when he remarks of family history as “just another aspect of historic research, only it is researching history with a personal connection”. In other words, family history is akin to, linked with, and unique from all other branches of history. Like other branches of history, it may be learned as a means to a goal-oriented ends—an amassing of dates, stories, facts, and information for the development of a physical product (i.e., book, archive, or collection). Even more importantly, however, learning family history for such pragmatic ends can be transcended. Isabelle takes a staunch position against the use of the term “genealogy” as a way to communicate the nature of her learning. She is resolved to “keep using the word ‘history’, rather than genealogy”, because “the important thing” to her is not the history that she can “give to the family”, but the history she can learn for herself. As a final point, the outcomes of learning for Thomas and Patrick are also understood to be more highly valued than the physical products they build and collect. Together the pair conveys a message that learning family history may just be an end in itself:

History was history. History was something to be interested in. Now history has a whole new light. When I read a book about what went on in Italy in the 1800s, and the different countries, and the unification, and the different emperors that tried to rule. It makes a whole lot of sense now to realize that my wife's great-grandfather lived that. But at the time [earlier in my life] it meant nothing. [Thomas]

...I'm very interested in how things in history intertwine and interrelate, and so on and so forth. So that, and I guess it's been largely my approach to history as well, rather than just studying an era for the sake of political or military history or whatever, I look at the economic history. I look at what plays were people going to the theatre to watch, what songs were people singing, what were they eating, what were they wearing, you know, the whole gamut of things to try and get a more complete understanding of an era in the past, and I apply that to family history research as well. [Patrick]

This idea of learning for the sake of learning has its beginnings in the theories of ancient Greek philosophers. For Plato and Aristotle, there was no separation between the domains of learning and leisure, as the former could readily be achieved in engagements of the latter. Though not exactly in the same group of subjects that prevailed during classical antiquity, genealogy is closely affiliated with these “non-utilitarian modes of human activity” (Pieper, 1963, p. 40), recognized widely as intellectual pursuits of the liberal arts. There is no easy way with which to determine the intellectual complexity of the material learned from genealogy and family history research, yet it may be reasonable to conclude that a great deal of knowledge can be acquired. Apart from highlighting the breadth of family history knowledge, it is key to focus on the learning that takes place when penetrating the depths of this knowledge. In positioning the process of learning as a social activity, and not just that of an individualistic activity, a possibility opens to grasp the connection between learning family history and learning about self and identity. A converging of the two practices, as facilitated by an element of learning, presents Patrick, Isabelle, Thomas, and Madeleine with opportunities to gain understandings of themselves in relation to others. In that sense, each individual is rewarded with self-knowledge which would seem to exceed in importance the knowledge utilized in assembling, or retrieving, the physical products of genealogy and family history research. As Pieper (1963) points out, “the knowledge of the functionary is not the only knowledge” (p. 40); and with this statement it is necessary to understand that the knowledge learned in leisure engagements of genealogy need not always serve the function of producing a “utilitarian result” (p. 38).

### **Summary of the Findings**

In analyzing the narratives of four amateur genealogists, five core themes emerged that are organized into clusters with the following labels: (a) reflections on family history storytelling, (b) initiating involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy, (c) telling stories of travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, (d) locating ancestors and a sense of self, and (e) intersections of genealogy and the serious leisure perspective. Within each cluster, there are also a number of subthemes that developed from the exchange between both a thematic and a structural analysis. These subthemes are detailed rather than over-determined, as practices of the latter nature run the risk of disconnecting stories from the contextual backgrounds in which they were told. Embedded within all subthemes are interpretations that integrate both theory and subjectivity. Neither of these interpretational approaches is capable of capturing “the truth” of the participants’ experiences, but nevertheless their combination exposes the complexity of stories and storytelling.

The findings from this research study, taken together as a whole, achieve a sense of coherence (Lieblich et. al, 1998). On account of all the stories told by the amateur genealogists themselves, it is the “larger picture” (Glover, 2003, p. 157) framing each narrative that contributes to a more meaningful understanding of their lives and experiences. The narrative of an amateur genealogist does not begin and end only when the individual starts and stops being an amateur genealogist. Narratives are part of the warp and weft of who these individuals are (Smith, 2010). An effort has been made to explain the four amateur genealogists’ narratives, without exhausting or eliminating all other possible explanations. In presenting such narratives through persuasive argumentation, only the readers and audiences of this text can assess whether the arguments are convincing and effective (Riessman, 1993). This assessment is not to be concluded until taking into account the subsequent section, which further explains the presented findings and discusses them with respect to a larger body of theory and research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

The following discussion is a forum within which to examine the core themes and subthemes that represent the findings from this research study, and to position them in the context of existing theories and previous research. Once more, the themes and subthemes that emerged from thematic and structural analyzes have been organized into the following clusters: (a) reflections on family history storytelling, (b) initiating involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy, (c) telling stories of travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, (d) locating ancestors and a sense of self, and (e) intersections of genealogy and the serious leisure perspective. The width, or comprehensiveness, of these findings signifies that a more detailed understanding of the amateur genealogists' narratives can be achieved by recognizing them as a diachronic unifier of past, present, and future.

This discussion begins with a consideration of the continuity and discontinuity that develop from the proximities and distances shaping narrative interactions. Storytelling practices can either connect or disconnect individuals to their family histories, thereby influencing the way in which such individuals acquire a sense of continuity and rootedness. Moreover, stories work to construct knowledge and memories of family history; but, in cases of limited narrative interaction and absent storytelling, individuals can be apprised of their families' ethnic origins and yet be without a collective memory of the familial (or ancestral) past. In view of the importance of ancestral lineages for those people who trace them, it seems ever more necessary to understand why such people involve themselves with leisure engagements of genealogy. Such involvements are discussed with reference to changes in family life and the fluidity of family relationships.

After addressing these two areas, the discussion shifts in the direction of responding to the research question of this study, which is: how do amateur genealogists—who embark on a quest for personal identity—convey their understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self? Upon contextualizing locations of an intergenerational sense of self and presenting a reconsideration of the quest for personal

identity, a final commentary on the intersections of genealogy, tourism, and the serious leisure perspective is offered. Some concluding remarks are then given which focus on the significance, as well as the limitations, of the study. Finally, and most importantly, this study concludes with implications for future research on genealogy in the leisure and tourism studies fields.

### **Family History Storytelling**

The participants in this research study reflect on family history storytelling. More specifically, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick reflect on stories, both told and untold, about their family histories. Stories are not just told *by* family members, but they are also told *to* family members in situations of interaction. Hence, stories constructed within families and about families are a key source for making sense of the family over time and space (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). Family history stories, particularly those stories listened to or consumed in an early stage of life, can provide a context within which to understand the experiences of different generations of family (see Fivush et al., 2008). It is this intergenerational context of experiences that, although generally beyond the scope of personal experience, has some bearing on a sense of rootedness in family history.

**Proximity, distance, continuity, and discontinuity.** Proximities and distances are decisive factors that can influence the nature and quality of storytelling practices. By living their early lives in attachment to spaces of ancestral settlement and extended family habitation, Isabelle and Patrick experienced frequent visits and interactions with extended family. Isabelle is revealed to have distinguished her sense of spatial attachment from that of Patrick by an eagerness to narrate a connection between the historical significance of her surroundings and the paternal grandfather who shared stories of people, place, and history. Unlike Isabelle and Patrick, Madeleine and Thomas lived their early lives in detachment from spaces of ancestral settlement and extended family habitation. As a consequence, their families did not experience frequent visits and interactions with extended family.

Isabelle's experiences support a notion that spatial proximity to extended family assists in facilitating narrative interactions. Narrative interactions between multiple generations of Isabelle's family are fundamental to her making sense of the lives and experiences of extended family and ancestors. In addition, how Isabelle remembers her past and what she narrates about it influence an understanding of who she was. She identified herself not just as a little girl, but as a child who nurtured existing family relationships, desired to understand her family's historical background, and connected in meaningful ways with the experiences of a family that extends far back into the past. With subtlety in her gestures, Isabelle communicates that she received more than just stories in her early life. These stories of her family's history humanized people who may otherwise be dehumanized, and consequently, they give a sense of continuity to her relationships with family across time and history.

Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick are without family history stories that they remember being significant to their early lives. This is not to say storytelling was completely absent in their family cultures, or that their families did not effectively communicate and narratively interact. Rather their narrative interactions, especially pertaining to the families of Thomas and Madeleine, were confronted with limitations of death, infrequent contact, a lack of participation in family rituals, and spatial distances. As storyteller roles shifted away from the grandparent generation, their parents came to possess a certain level of control over when and what family history stories could be extended to succeeding generations. But Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick had parents who did not tell family history stories. Since family history stories were not performed by their parents, due to any number of possible reasons, they experienced a dearth of intergenerational storytelling. The experiences of Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick are therefore differentiated by a sense of discontinuity in their relationships with family across time and history.

An examination of family history storytelling is an indispensable contribution to our understandings of the value of rootedness prior to involvements with genealogy. It informs these understandings for the reason that an early stage of life is when stories begin to take on new meanings for an individual in relation to family (Fivush et al., 2008; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Family is one of the first social frameworks in life with which



individuals interact, and from which they construct self, identity, and belonging (Pratt & Fiese, 2004; Stone, 1988). Stories constructed, performed, and consumed by family occur in a process of ongoing interaction (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, 2006). These interactions make meanings that allow individuals to understand their experiences in the context of what has been experienced by different generations of family (Fivush et al., 2008). An intergenerational context provided by family history stories enables Isabelle, in particular, to understand that her experiences of early life have been shaped by the lives and experiences of extended family and ancestors. Accordingly, Isabelle understands herself to be rooted in a meaningful place in her family's history.

### **Inheritances of the ancestral past: Family history storytelling and knowledge.**

Family stories and storytelling are one of the primary ways in which individuals “create a sense of family history and identity” (Pratt & Fiese, 2004, p. 2-3). These stories constitute a product of family interaction that makes sense and meanings of the myriad experiences of a family dispersed across generations. They represent more than just a collection that is (re)constructed and (re)shared from one generation to the next. Family storytelling signifies processes of remembering, understanding, evaluating, and interpreting both within and between generations (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, 2006). It is through such processes that family stories develop into a shared history, “family legacies” (Thompson, Koenig Kellas, Soliz, Thompson, Epp & Schrod, 2009, p. 107), and a “narrative inheritance” (Goodall, 2005, p. 492). With the narratives of Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick, it is quite plain that family history stories are more of a privileged inheritance than a universal one.

Inheritances and legacies are the “strands of meaning that run through the family in ways that give it identity” (Thompson et al., 2009, p. 108), and in this case, ethnicity. Ethnicity is both a matter of legacy and ancestry, yet it is anything but a simple transference from ancestral to present-day generations. As white Canadians of Western European ancestry, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick express themselves in a reasonably confident manner with regard to knowledge of their ethnic origins. In an early stage of life, they knew with some degree of certainty where their ancestors came from, in both an ethnic and spatial sense. Their knowledge signifies that of a retained

understanding of ancestral ethnicities across multiple generations, or an enduring ethnic consciousness. This ethnic consciousness may have been permitted to endure, in part, because of family storytelling, family interactions, surnames, intra-ethnic marriages, ethnic community ties, and cultural retentions (see Waters, 1990).

In representing a range of generations, Thomas and Patrick are far more removed than Madeleine and Isabelle from the ancestors who comprised the first-generation of diasporic migrants. Temporal distance, however vast it is, may have implications for the ethnic identities of all four storytellers. Even though ethnic identification was not explicitly queried by the researcher, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick neither problematize the coherence of ethnic identity nor make essentialist claims to this identity. Timothy (2008) takes to suggesting that a problematization of ethnic identity may diminish as the distance between first-generation diasporic migrants and succeeding generations expands with time. Furthermore, the salience of an ethnic identity may also dwindle, especially among people whose ancestors migrated many generations earlier (Timothy, 2008), to the point that it can weaken the need to seek and recover a primordial or predetermined ethnic identity.

Knowledge of family history is contingent upon memory (Hareven, 1978). What this means is that for individuals to have knowledge of their ancestral origins, memories need to be stored, conserved, selected, and handed down from generation to generation within the mnemonic community of family. These memories are, in Halbwachs' (1952/1992) terms, a collective memory of events of the past that may or may not have been personally experienced. Intergenerational transmissions of a living collective memory, through concatenations of interaction and storytelling, are an inactive practice in the families of Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick. By bringing to light the obscurities and gaps which characterize their family history knowledge in an early stage of life, they convey that preceding generations' remembrances of the ancestral past (i.e., beyond beliefs of ethnic and spatial origins) were not inherited to them. Madeleine, Thomas, and Patrick did not have an upbringing "dominated by narratives [or stories] that preceded [their] birth or consciousness" (Hirsch, 2008, p. 107) and connected them to their ancestral pasts. Isabelle, although not completely dominated by a narrative inheritance, had glimmers of family history knowledge and a connection to her ancestral past. She

would hold features of what Hirsch (2008) identifies as a “postmemory”, which, in original reference to the second-generation of Holocaust survivors, denotes not “*literal* ‘memories’ of others’ experiences” (p. 109, italics in original), but an intergenerational transfer of memories.

Collective memory of a family is significant in the context of family history knowledge by reason of an understanding that it is, conceivably, “a constantly receding horizon” (Meethan, 2008, p. 106). The fleetingness of a collective memory is nicely captured by Rigney (2005) in the following statement: “memories constantly disappear as they are transmitted from generation to generation—like water transported in a leaky bucket which slowly runs dry, they are continuously being lost along the way” (p. 12). This analogy holds true because collective memory is normally transmitted over a span of three generations, or approximately 80 to 100 years, after which it begins to fade away (Halbwachs, 1952/1992, Meethan, 2004, 2008). Thus, it is not so much that the participants in this research study are afflicted by what Breathnach (2006) refers to as a “loss of generational consciousness” (see Huyssen, 1995; Lasch, 1979), or a loss of a shared consciousness of themselves and their history as a generation. These four individuals, perhaps together with many other amateur genealogists, are arguably troubled by an incomplete family history knowledge and a waning intergenerational transfer of collective memory. If the collective memory of a family is “lost, incomplete, unexpressed in everyday life or remains inevitably distant because of...one’s forebears” (Breathnach, 2006, p. 114), then it becomes the responsibility of present-day generations to recover that which been cast adrift by generations from the past.

### **Involvements with Leisure Engagements of Genealogy**

Explanations for proliferating interests and curiosities in ancestral lineages cover a whole gamut of social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and political changes. The pluralities and complexities inherent of these changes place hurdles in the path of responding to a straightforward—but seemingly elusive—question: why do people become interested in, and subsequently involved with, genealogy? Multidisciplinary researchers of the genealogy phenomenon have been both intrigued and confounded by this very question. Yet, one of the more important shortcomings of their studies is that they conflate the

reasons why people currently engage in genealogy with “the ‘real causes’ of their involvement” (Lambert, 1996, p. 120), if a “real” cause can even be said to exist. That is to say, such studies overlook the *past* conditions that influenced people to become involved with leisure engagements of genealogy, in contrast to the *present* condition that influences people to continue with their involvements.

**Making sense of the involvement turn.** An anthology of research undertaken by anthropologist P. Basu on the entwined practices of seeking roots and tracing lineages professes that the two practices act to counter the existential preoccupations or “anxieties” (Basu, 2007, p. 228) of late modern society (Giddens, 1991). Regarding the context of their initial involvements with leisure engagements of genealogy, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick reveal no such anxieties. They are undeniably fascinated with the origins and histories of their families, and the meanings of “knowing where you’ve come from” (Carsten, 2000, p. 689), however each individual does not express being prompted to become involved with genealogy so as to explore or affirm a response to the identity question: who am I? Metaphorically speaking, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick were not *hungry* for the discovery of a sense of self and identity, but *thirsty* for “establishing continuities...between past, present, and future” (Carsten, 2000, p. 689).

Desires to establish continuities are an expression of a need to mend the gaps that have disrupted the flow of “kinship time” (Carsten, 2000, p. 692). Recent comparisons drawn between the lineage-tracing practices of both adoptees and amateur genealogists (see Legrand, 2009) make it possible to understand that the gaps concerning Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick did not arise from a problematization of identity, spatial displacement, and an ambiguous personal history. Instead these gaps may have derived from a sense of temporal dislocation, by which the “threads of continuity” (Carsten, 2000, p. 696) woven between generations of the past and present are either torn or frayed. The threads that bind an ancestral past with a personal present may exist in such a delicate state due to, in part, the fading of “historical continuity” (Lasch, 1979, p. 5). Discontinuities of this sort may give way to the realization of an obscure ancestral

background, a sense of “genealogical bewilderment” (Sants, 1964), as well as interests and curiosities stimulated by a desire to know, or know more, about family history.

Interests and curiosities in ancestral lineages are generally framed within the academic literature as originating from a denial or deprivation—for descendants of African slaves, diasporic migrants, and Holocaust survivors—of family history knowledge (Zerubavel, 2011). While conceding that their respective stocks of family history knowledge necessitated enhancement, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick did not become involved with genealogy because they were deprived of family history knowledge. Put differently, family history knowledge is acknowledged by them as an incomplete inheritance, but still it was not an inheritance that long denied their lives of meaning. In the case of the four storytellers in this study, it may be appropriate to consider interests and curiosities in ancestral lineages as originating from notions of insufficient collective memory, incomplete family history knowledge, and fraying threads of temporal continuity (Carsten, 2000; Zerubavel, 2011).

Although identity questions did not present themselves as an impetus for the involvements of Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick, it should not be implied that this questioning is in any sense irrelevant. It may be that questions regarding personal identity do not manifest as a preoccupation or anxiety in the time leading up to leisure engagements of genealogy. In other words, when choices are made to initiate involvements, questions of personal identity may not yet be “self-evident” (Cannell, 2011, p. 463). Otherwise, it may be that such questions come to pass only after an indefinite period of continuing involvement. Bearing this limitation in mind, an emerging pattern in the extant literature has been identified that, to some extent, helps to frame the involvement turn. This pattern, which also surfaces in the participants’ narratives, corresponds involvement not to questioning of identity, but to changes in family life. The “trigger” events of marriages and births (Yakel, 2004), in addition to reminders of mortality and experiences of bereavement (Cannell, 2011; Nash, 2002), represent the more notable changes accepted by a multidisciplinary group of researchers. Yet, efforts by researchers to explain why it is that these changes in family life prompt involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy have not been clear.

Key concepts of sociological thinking such as fateful moments (Giddens, 1991), epiphanies (Denzin, 1989) and turning points (Strauss, 1959/1997) may prove useful for identifying changes that facilitate the involvement turn (see Hackstaff, 2009). The method employed in this study provided a suitable means for uncovering the presence and absence of turning points in stories told by Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick. With Madeleine and Isabelle, a definable event that both necessitated a negotiation of self and identity and influenced their turns to involvement is lacking. It is suspected, though, that their turns and negotiations encompassed more than just one moment in their lives. For Patrick and Thomas, there were specific events in life that cumulatively had implications both for their turns to involvement and negotiations of self and identity. Given the consequentiality of each event, the pair was faced with personal changes which may be interpreted as disruptive (e.g., death), constructive (e.g., marriage, birth, retirement), or simply transitional. Whichever the case, personal changes do not happen in vacuo; and for this reason, they are not to be taken as detached from the ongoing transformations that families experience as a collective unit.

Grand theories about families becoming “increasingly discontinuous, tenuous, or fragile” (Hackstaff, 2009, p. 134) would seem like a robust theoretical crutch on which to depend for rationalizing involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy (see Basu, 2004b, on the weakening of family bonds). These theories, on the other hand, are strongly criticized for misrepresenting the diverse and multifaceted nature of contemporary families in order to lay emphasis on a supposed decline or fragmentation in their forms and functions (Smart, 2007). Consequently, it remains unconvincing that involvements with genealogy would be founded on the diminishing importance of family relationships (Kramer, 2011). In their accounts of transitional experiences, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick willingly share details of situations when their roles in the family transformed with time. Family life is portrayed by each of them as more or less patterned by sets of roles, practices, and performances. Since this way of life is not static, it can be intermittently altered in the long-term by transitions (i.e., entries and exits) into roles at varying locations in the life course. This understanding of family roles as mostly fluid and relatively impermanent carries over into the way identities in the family are understood as well. Disengaging “old” identities and negotiating “new” ones is all part of

a complex family trajectory that individuals experience as they evolve during their lifetime. But as some individuals move in the direction of forming new identities with *new* families, existing relationships with *old* families are seldom given up completely.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the main “rediscoveries” by sociologists of family life was that “people have kin....[and] vertical kinship matters” (Smart, 2007, p. 44). This observation was especially poignant at the time because it restored what had long been marginalized in sociological discourse (Mason, 2008). Even with such an observation, explanations as to why kinship matters, and why “kinship is fascinating” (Mason, 2008, p. 29), are only just beginning to be assembled (see Smart, 2007, for a mapping of new ways of thinking on this subject). With respect to the participants’ narratives, it can be argued that the turn to involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy emerges because relationships with family begin to take on a renewed sense of significance in their lives. The fluid character of family relationships connotes that there are constant (re)definitions of meaning taking place over time. It is in living with this fluidity in family relationships that Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick eventually come to confront their sense of “embeddedness” (Smart, 2007, p. 43) in family history. Referring in part to experiences in her own life, Smart (2007) gathers that “for many the sense of being embedded in a family history can be taken for granted and, as a result, it may go unremarked” (p. 81). When the value of family relationships is ultimately acknowledged, Thomas, Isabelle, Madeleine, and Patrick respond by pursuing leisure engagements of genealogy as a way to acquire this personal sense of embeddedness in family history.

### **Contextualizing Locations of an Intergenerational Sense of Self**

According to theorizations of family life by proponents of the individualization thesis, family is no longer a salient point of reference for a sense of self. In late modern conditions where individualism is alleged to prevail, “the self is seen as malleable, dependent on context and open to being rewritten by the author of any given autobiography” (Smart, 2007, p. 81). Indeed this version of an individualized self has an emphatic presence in numerous sociological commentaries, but there are also alternative understandings of the self (i.e., relational self; Mead, 1934/1962) that have been just as

influential. Social researchers have identified many spheres of life in which people's lives are lived in *connection* with others and not on the basis of *disconnection*. The family stands out in this respect as it comprises a whole system of interpersonal relationships, and many people understand their lives, selves, and identities as embedded within the context of these relationships (Smart, 2007). It is intriguing that such relationships are not extended solely to those people who are still living. Nonliving ancestors, or “dead kin” (Kramer, 2011, p. 382), open up a new web of relationships within which to embed a sense of self. Hence, opportunities afforded by genealogy and family history research to engage vast networks of ancestors are what make the two practices so unique and compelling (Kramer, 2011; Mason, 2008).

Tracing ancestral lineages and researching family histories provides the symbolic means to connect—personally, imaginatively, emotionally, and materially—to preceding generations. Each of the ways in which amateur genealogists form “connectedness” (Smart, 2007, p. 2) is deserving of its own discussion. Given that such discussions would be too lengthy to include here (see Lambert, 2006, for a detailed treatment of these connections), it is instead important to direct our attention toward addressing the research question that guides this study (i.e., the conveyed understandings of a location of an intergenerational sense of self). For the purpose of clarity, the kind of connectedness which constitutes the focus of this research study is that between the self and preceding generations of family, kin, and ancestors. Individuals engaging in genealogy and family history research are understood to be making use of these two practices in order to allow “the self to connect beyond and of itself” (Kramer, 2011, p. 380). It is almost a truism that the self connects with others, mainly family and kin, through symbolic social interaction. However, somewhat less of a truism is this notion that the self can connect with nonliving others, such as deceased family, kin, and ancestors, across an indeterminate span of generations (Cannell, 2011). It may well be that the reason behind our lack of consideration for the social interactions between the self and the deceased is because the latter exists in an imaginary, and not a bodily, form.

So as to connect with preceding generations, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas endeavour to temporally locate themselves in a narrative history. They turn to narratives of their family histories to inform the narratives they retain of their own



personal histories, and vice versa. What is interesting about family history narratives is that they concern people, places, times, and events which are normally outside the scope of an amateur genealogist's personal history. And so by utilizing such resources as historical data, records, and information to construct these narratives, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas aim to improve understandings of themselves, their experiences, and the experiences of preceding generations. But family history narratives, as well as the stories of the lives within, can only be apprehensible from the present. An analysis of G. H. Mead's theory of the past by Järvinen (2004) suggests there is no "objective past in the history of individuals....no past...in its pure essence....[but] only a past—or a plurality of pasts—constructed from the point of view of an ever-changing present" (p. 47). Seeing as though Mead's theory can also be read in conjunction with his theorization of the self, it may be that the self draws on family history narratives in order to "account for [it]self in the present" (Kramer, 2011, p. 381). The family history narratives on which Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas rely are conceived as representations of a "symbolically reconstructed past" (Maines, Sugrue & Katovich, 1983, p. 163). Symbolic reconstructions of the past imply a (re)defining of the meanings of the past *in* the present and *for* the present (Maines et al., 1983). In other words, with every reconstruction of the ancestral (or familial) past, it is a fleeting present that shapes how Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas account for or locate a sense of self.

The self is a temporally reflexive phenomenon, capable of reflecting back (in the past) and forward (in the future) from the perspective of the present. It narrates the personal past, a past of both distant and recent experiences, in hopes that the narrative itself can supply a sense of personal continuity. For some amateur genealogists, however, these narratives of the personal past are not, in a temporal sense, completely self-orienting. Freeman (2002) writes of the self as "a self that is in large measure unconscious of its own historical formation" (p. 203). It is a self that has not yet developed an adequate understanding of what precedes its birth and the personally experienced past. This is because the distant origins of the self remain mostly hidden, "not in the sense of that which has been buried through the forceful work of repression" (Freeman, 2002, p. 202), but of that which extends well beyond the boundaries of time and experience. To breach this boundary, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas call

upon narratives of family history to form a history of the self in the present, or a “story of its becoming” (Saar, 2002, p. 234). As Breathnach (2006) asserts, such “collective narratives” (p. 114) provide the material out of which individuals recover their own personal past. Yet, each amateur genealogist does not perceive it as a project through which to deliberately trace the history of the self. Family history narratives are constructed, rather, for the reason that understanding the experiences of preceding generations may extend the self in historical time and thus facilitate locations of an intergenerational sense of self.

Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas encounter similar complexities concerning locations of an intergenerational sense of self. As the four amateur genealogists reach deeper and deeper into the ancestral past, it becomes apparent that locating a sense of self in generations beyond the more recent is constrained by the receding depths of this past. There are many stories of the experiences of distant ancestral generations that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas come to tell as a result of family history research, but such experiences do not always have a bearing on how these individuals locate an intergenerational sense of self. Outside of contrasting the historical “truths” of the ancestral past (viz., what is known to have happened) with the possibility of alternative circumstances and outcomes (viz., what may have happened), there is no other way than to interpretively imagine how the experiences of distant ancestral generations may have influenced both the self and the personal past. Stories of the experiences of recent generations (i.e., parents’ and grandparents’ generations) are more fully embraced by Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas, perhaps because they perceive these experiences as having directly influenced themselves and their personal pasts. Moreover, such experiences are observed to be valuable for connecting experiences from the personal past to experiences from the ancestral past.

Kramer (2011) points to an understanding that family history research can be employed “as a tool by which to locate the specificity of an individual’s life experiences in relation to the historical life experiences of family members” (p. 385). This idea is of particular relevance given that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas are able to understand some of their personal experiences in relation to the experiences of preceding generations. Though the latter set of experiences may, or may not, shape the way in

which they interpret their personal pasts, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas do not necessarily look to this set of experiences to change their interpretations of the personal past. Interestingly enough, they look to these experiences, and the broader narrative which frames them, to gain self-understandings. Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas resemble each other in the sense that they all gain self-understandings by locating an intergenerational sense of self on the basis of inheritances. Such inheritances are above all intangible, and they can take the form of anything from traits, morals, and values to resemblances, likenesses, and identities. Furthermore, inheritances are discerned through a process of “personal electivity” and “non-electivity” (Mason, 2008). That is, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas creatively negotiate (*viz.*, embrace and disown) inheritances which appear fixed (e.g., biological or genetic) and unfixed (i.e., open to interpretation or discretion; Kramer, 2011; Mason, 2008).

In an intergenerational sense, inheritances from distant ancestral generations are not always accepted as informing a sense of self unless legitimated as having been passed down to recent generations. Parents and grandparents are recognized by Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas as the intermediaries, so to speak, through which inheritances from distant ancestral generations were bestowed onto them. Any one of the multitude of ancestral generations can be credited as the “true” source of an inheritance, but until the inheritance is acknowledged as having reached (grand)parental generations through a “connective schema” (e.g., a chain, network, pattern, or line; Kramer, 2011, p. 386), only then may it be negotiated, and possibly, accepted. An intergenerational sense of self is therefore understood to be informed, at least to some degree, more by recent generations than distant ancestral generations.

Family history narratives offer amateur genealogists, many of whom may have travelled for a leisure engagement of genealogy, privileged opportunities to facilitate locations of an intergenerational sense of self. These opportunities are said to be privileged because, without such narratives, there are likely to be few alternative sources within which to locate an intergenerational sense of self. The importance of locating an intergenerational sense of self in a family history narrative is not totally clear as of yet. It is still useful, even if only in a tentative sense, to express that this contemporary generation of amateur genealogists considers it meaningful to temporally locate a sense

of self within a family history narrative because it enriches their self-understandings. A sense of succession from generations originating in the ancestral past and stretching into the personal present endows the self with an understanding that its formation historically antedates its conception (Lasch, 1979). This historical formation of the self is not intended to be conveyed as that of a pre-formation of the self, since it has long been theorized that human beings are born without a pre-given or fixed sense of self. Rather, the self gains an enriched understanding by invoking the historical “antecedents of [it]self” (Cannell, 2011, p. 472). Such historical antecedents, which take the form of inheritances for the amateur genealogists in this study, provide the self with an understanding that it is both embedded, and extended, within a historical framework of preceding generations beyond the here and the now (Fivush et al., 2008; Kramer, 2011).

To revert to Fivush et al.’s (2008) definition of an intergenerational self—a self defined as much by its place in a family history as a personal history—it is arguable that an intergenerational sense of self for the amateur genealogist is constructed by embedding a personal history narrative in a family history narrative. An embedding of the former in the latter is not requisite, but nevertheless fundamental—for it allows the meanings of personal history to derive value from the lives, memories, events, and experiences of the familial (see Breathnach, 2006, on collective memories). Together, personal history and family history narratives are mutually constitutive, in that both sets of narratives are continually (re)constructed and (re)interpreted in light of one another. Although until now it may have been insinuated that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas construct family history narratives at will, this insinuation would be erroneous. Personalized understandings and tellings of family history are weaved from an established, yet limited, inventory of cultural narrative resources (e.g., rhetorical conventions, dominant social discourses of gender and class, fictional narratives, discourses of public history, etc.). In addition, these narrative resources structure ongoing negotiations of personal history and family history. A closer look at the personal history and family history relationship may thus reveal that the former can be narratively emplotted in the latter. The emplotting of personal history narratives in a broader narrative context would seem, at last, to benefit the amateur genealogist who endeavours to bridge a temporal gap of discontinuity between generations of the past and present. For

an intergenerational sense of self, these newly emplotted narratives allow for personal time to be continuous with historical time (Lambert, 1996).

**Reconsidering the quest for personal identity.** Of all possible rationales for pursuing leisure engagements of genealogy, it is interesting that those associated with searches (Erben, 1991) or quests (Timothy & Guelke, 2008) for identity hold the most sway in the multidisciplinary literature. On account of its conjectured importance, an *a priori* assumption of this research study was that amateur genealogists embark on a quest for personal identity via their family histories. The quest metaphor was predicated on the questioning of identity, which had been understood to be prevalent among diasporic descendants and amateur genealogists alike. In view of the findings from this research study, identity questions were slight, but not prominent, in the narratives of Madeleine and Thomas. It is not the concept of personal identity as such that was left un referenced. Personal identity is constitutive of sense of self (Hewitt, 1997), and hence it is inseparable from our discussions. Questions of personal identity, on the other hand, emerge rather conspicuously in the narratives of Patrick and Isabelle (e.g., Where do I come from? How did I get to be who I am? How does who I am connect to the history of my family? How does my family history shape who I am? etc.). As mentioned in a previous section, such questions may come to pass only after an indefinite period of continuing involvement with genealogy. Yet, even though the pair poses questions regarding identity, does this act mean that their rationales for pursuing leisure engagements of genealogy are focused exclusively on a quest to resolve such questions?

Questions of personal identity, notes Cannell (2011), are a familiar idea among amateur genealogists. But, these questions are “by no means the only account they give of why genealogy is important to them, nor [are they] necessarily the dominant one” (Cannell, 2011, p. 463). The same argument can also be made with regard to Patrick and Isabelle. To each of them, genealogy does not outright comprise a quest for finding answers to their questions of personal identity. Traditionally, quests presuppose a search for a sense of self and identity that is lost, indeterminate, or inadequately characterized (Basu, 2007; MacIntyre, 1981). It may, for instance, make sense to refer to the context of adoptees who quest for truths about their personal identities due to an ambiguous

personal history, an absence of shared memory, and an insufficient sense of biological relatedness (Carsten, 2000; Legrand, 2009). In the context of amateur genealogists, however, both critics (Timothy & Guelke, 2008) and non-genealogists (Kramer, 2011) have discredited the genealogical quest on the grounds of the significance ascribed to it as a way to explore and discover the self. Nash (2002) reveals that, while widely recognized to be instrumental in confirming “truth[s] about [personal] identity” (p. 28), the genealogical quest is a misguided attempt at recovering such ostensibly simplistic truths.

It is not so much that the quest metaphor is altogether immaterial to genealogy, for indeed it has established its relevance to the search for roots and origins (Basu, 2004a, 2007). Instead, it is that the application of this metaphor to rationales for pursuing leisure engagements of genealogy may not be entirely suitable. Once more, the profoundly influential work of Basu (2007) solidifies this idea that amateur genealogists rely not on their leisure but on travel for self-exploration and self-discovery. In a recent study of individuals who travel voluntarily as a lifestyle, Cohen (2010a) makes it plain that “rather than finding solutions to issues of personal identity...leisure travel left them with more questions than answers” (p. 298). While Cohen (2010b) argues that searches for personal identity through leisure travel are akin to “chasing” an illusion or myth, Basu (2007) would retort that, to individuals (i.e., roots-seeking and genealogy-tracing tourists) who live by this myth, this is not “a deconstruction of the myth...but rather its revitalization” (p. 162). What strikes as interesting in this debate over the acceptance of such a myth is the element of travel. When the element of travel is momentarily cleared away from our line of sight, it becomes evident that, for Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas, leisure engagements of genealogy do not comprise an individualistic project of finding answers and making discoveries. Leisure engagements of genealogy are thus pursued—in part, and not solely—to gain self-understandings.

In studies of leisure, there is a commonly accepted understanding that leisure facilitates self-development (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987). This rhetoric of development implies a growing, changing, and improving of the self as it progresses toward humanist notions of self-realization, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization (see Maslow, 1970). Though there is nothing objectionable with viewing the self in these terms, it is essential to note that the self cannot be acknowledged as autonomous, or separate, from society.

Self and self-understandings are constructions forged in interaction with others, and neither are they a fixed essence nor can they be acquired in any “definitive sense” (Cohen, 2010b, p. 125). In other words, self-understandings are subjective, relational, and processual. They are not taken to be a major motivating factor for Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas to pursue their leisure engagements of genealogy. Rather, it appears as though self-understandings (viz., by locating an intergenerational sense of self) surface as an (un)expected, but desirable, outcome of these leisure engagements. In that respect, leisure can be instrumentally valuable as a means to gain enriched self-understandings.

Notwithstanding his reference to lifestyle travellers, Cohen (2010b) affirms of leisure travel “as a context conducive to learning about one’s self [and identity]” (p. 125). In current thinking on genealogy, leisure, and tourism, a parallel has not yet been drawn between learning, self, and identity (see Lambert, 1996, for his allusion to learning). The work of education theorists, specifically Jarvis (2009), addresses this connection by claiming that self and identity emerge from the learning which takes place in social interaction. In this sense, the self and the Other are engaged in a process of reflexive learning, which, like that of learning in general, is carried out over the whole of life (i.e., lifelong learning; Jarvis, 2009). This integration of learning with self and identity construction opens up a new way of interpreting the identity questions posed by amateur genealogists. There may be no such thing as a complete answer to an identity question, and while some amateur genealogists believe that answers are found in experiences of travel (Basu, 2007), it is highly problematic to accept these answers as something of a perpetual resolution (cf. Timothy, 2008). By acknowledging that selves and identities are capable of being learned—throughout the course of a lifetime, and not just in a serendipitous “tourist moment” (Cary, 2004)—it would seem necessary to reconsider what it is that amateur genealogists quest for. Until a new kind of quest can be identified, leisure and tourism scholars ought to proceed cautiously when ascribing amateur genealogists with ideals that may not be fully realizable.

### **Intersections of Genealogy, Tourism, and the Serious Leisure Perspective**

There are, of course, many leisure engagements which can be pursued not only at home, but also in places outside of the home environment (Carr, 2002; Leiper, 1979).

Travel to, or mobility for, leisure engagements suggests an inseparability of travel and leisure, as evidenced in such conjoined terms as “leisure travel” (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987) or “touristic leisure” (Leiper, 1990). Although conceived as taking place primarily within a localized space, opportunities to experience a leisure engagement of genealogy can certainly be sought in non-local settings (Timothy, 2008). Amateur genealogists willing to travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy may do so as an extension of their leisure lifestyles. That is, leisure engagements of genealogy form part of a home-based lifestyle that can be mobilized and sustained in temporary short- or long-haul travel. While leisure engagements have long been a valued component of everyday life, travel was once perceived by early tourism theorists to be distinct from, as well as a temporary reversal of (Cohen, 1979), everyday life. New understandings are now surfacing, however, that exemplify leisure, travel, and everyday life as intersecting in complex ways (Larsen, 2008).

Travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy often points amateur genealogists in the direction of their ancestral lands (Timothy & Guelke, 2008). Ancestral lands have been pegged by tourism scholars as being found only within the boundaries of a single nation-state—a homeland of origin. Branching out from this monadic frame, it is possible to grasp that, relative to the home environment, ancestral lands can be found in places of varying scales. Certain historic places, when visited, achieve personal significance because of the sites and objects encountered in this space. A sense of physically *being there*, standing in the presence of such sites and objects, can stimulate every one of the human senses (i.e., most notably sight and touch). These sensory engagements, even if governed by the “visual gaze” (Urry, 1990), may also evoke affective and spiritual activity. Experiences at sites displaying the visible signs of ancestral life have been conveyed by participants, like Isabelle and Patrick, as emotionally engulfing and spiritually fulfilling; almost to the point that such emotional involvement and spiritual fulfillment can be difficult to communicate to others. Even so, it cannot be that all who experience these sites internalize, both emotionally and spiritually, the objects of their gaze in a uniform fashion.

Drawing inspiration from Nora (1989), Basu (2001) explains that sites of personal (and familial) heritage are invested with emotions which extract from collective



memories of the past. Relics from the collective memory of family, including cemetery gravestones, ancestral homes, places of worship, and artefacts from local museums, can even incite the workings of imagination. These particular relics, or symbolic manifestations of the ancestral past, may encourage the dissolution of time and foster imaginative travel to the very time period in which ancestors lived (Nash, 2002). In mentally traversing time, it would appear that the material reality of place converges with the internal reality of imagination. Material realities are, in many instances, needed to anchor the genealogical imagination—a contrived world largely composed of stories about nonliving ancestors (Lambert, 2006; Nash, 2002). Historic places therefore matter as a space through which to solidify the connection between stories, ancestors, and imagination (viz., a connection which helps to further bridge a temporal gap between the personal past and the ancestral past). In what way, however, does travel to ancestral lands, and visits to sites that belong to “the more intimate narratives of the family history” (Basu, 2007, p. 2), facilitate experiences of a leisure engagement of genealogy?

Encounters with historic places and personal heritage sites can serve an alternative purpose from that which has been discussed above. Experiences of a leisure engagement of genealogy are not just a matter of being in *extraordinary* places with which tourists feel symbolically, spiritually, and emotionally connected. Place can be a background or setting where leisure and tourism come together (Crouch, 2000), and as such, it may shape the way in which tourists come to experience a leisure engagement of genealogy. Some of the genealogy-tracing tourists examined here take an existing stock of knowledge as their point of departure, proceeding then to locate heritage sites that validate, disprove, or advance their family history research. These predominantly visual, and occasionally utilitarian, acts of tracing ancestors, information, and origins—though taking place in an “ancestral location” (Timothy & Guelke, 2008, p. 11), or in a “‘sacred’ destination” (Basu, 2007, p. 57)—do not happen solely at sites of personal heritage. When such acts of tracing are broadened to include those that occur in institutions and documentation centres (e.g., public libraries, genealogical centres, record offices, archives, etc.), experiences may continue to be emotionally involving, but not necessarily spiritually fulfilling. Nonetheless, these experiences of travel can closely approximate everyday experiences of family history research. What may distinguish a travel

experience from such everyday experiences is that the former can create new opportunities to access data, information, and materials which would otherwise be unobtainable over the Internet or in the near-home environment. Although more is to be said about this matter below, it may be worth mentioning that not all of these opportunities can fully realized through physical travel.

If not a primary motive for travel, leisure engagements of genealogy are likely, at the very least, to figure as a secondary motive. According to some of the amateur genealogists in this study, while family history motivates them to travel to their ancestral lands (viz., to search for, learn about, and connect with people and places from the ancestral or familial past), a leisure engagement of genealogy does not always determine the main purpose of such travel. On a related note, McKercher and Chan (2005) argue that by identifying an individual as a special interest tourist (e.g., a genealogy-tracing tourist), it can mistakenly situate “the pursuit of the specialist interest at the heart of the travel decision and destination choice” (p. 30). To lend weight to this argument, Basu (2007) reveals that few tourists in his study visited the ancestral homeland with the intent of conducting family history research:

In the context of genealogical tourism in Scotland, an important observation that can be drawn from the questionnaire respondents’ comments is that most serious family history research is pursued at home, not during visits to Scotland. Largely because of the Internet and the international network of LDS (Latter Day Saints) and other family history research centres, much work can be done at a distance and few respondents actually visited Scotland with the express intention of conducting documentary research. Those who did were sometimes disappointed with what they could achieve in the little time they had available. Unsurprisingly, few were prepared to waste an expensive trip to what is perceived as an exceptionally beautiful country sitting in an archives office accessing information that is largely available via the Internet anyway. (p. 45-46)

For most of the four participants, their experiences of travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy were not exclusively driven by a desire to pursue such engagements in institutions and documentation centres. In part, this may be because the opportunities that travel provides for accessing data, information, and materials are not easily achievable. Although accustomed to the challenges, complications, and constraints

associated with family history research, attempts at seizing such opportunities during travel may be, in reality, too much for some genealogy-tracing tourists to bear. Moreover, obtaining primary source documents, untangling ancestral connections, and following false leads can be very “costly and time consuming” (Meethan, 2004, p. 143). Time, overall, seems to be an especially critical determinant. As Basu (2007) indicates, only a small number of genealogy-tracing tourists—namely ones visiting an ancestral homeland—may be willing to allot their time and energy toward conducting family history research at institutions and documentation centres.

While there may be relatively few occasions when genealogy and family history research factor as the main purpose of travel, this should not signify that a leisure engagement of genealogy is totally absent from the travel experience. Empirical studies by both Brey and Lehto (2007) and Chang and Gibson (2011) demonstrate that the activity, or set of activities, which an individual engages in daily life can often be the same as those engaged when on holiday. It seems that a similar case has been made for individuals who travel in order to engage a particular form of serious leisure (see Green & Jones, 2005). This contemporary perspective on special interest travel, which a handful of tourism scholars are now characterizing as “serious tourism” (e.g., Curtin, 2010), supports this idea that some individuals travel to experience the same serious leisure activity they pursue at home (see Trauer, 2006, on special interest leisure tourists). Unfortunately, this assumption of seriousness—in either leisure or travel—cannot yet be extended to genealogy, for it still evades a clear classification.

The findings from this research study establish, nevertheless, that worthwhile insights can be gained by facilitating an intersection between genealogy and the serious leisure perspective (SLP). With these insights in hand, the intent is only to submit an interpretation of genealogy that can render it less obscure, and perhaps more intelligible, with respect to this framework. The principle of time can be a deceptively simplistic agent when it comes to classifying leisure engagements as one of three possible forms. Given the temporal boundaries forged by Stebbins (2007), it would appear that genealogy defies a perfect fit. On account of the short-term and long-term distinctions that separate project-based leisure and serious leisure, respectively, there is no apparent logic to determine what constitutes leisure of a short-term or long-term nature. Time serves as an

ambiguous yardstick in the SLP; and due to this aspect alone, it is not plain whether the years that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas have spent engaging in genealogy amount to serious leisure or project-based leisure.

Project-based leisure can be susceptible to interruption, thereby compelling individuals engaged in such leisure to temporarily discontinue involvement (Stebbins, 2005). Serious leisure is also susceptible to interruption, however, the interruptions experienced in this form of leisure do not bring about temporary discontinuance; rather, they alter patterns of involvement. The storytellers in this study disclose that leisure engagements of genealogy can be influenced by “situational contingencies” (Heuser, 2005, p. 49), including changes in family, work, and lifecycle (Brown, 2007). Such contingencies have caused them, at different points in their lives, to either momentarily defer or provisionally curtail their involvements. During these periods of deferred and curtailed involvement, Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas may have shifted along a continuum that ranges from serious to casual commitment (Scott, 2012). Evidence from a study by Dilley and Scraton (2010) on the leisure careers of women climbers indicates that, owing to experiences of motherhood, it is not uncommon for women to give up and return to the leisure with which they once seriously engaged. Leisure careers in the SLP, on the other hand, are understood to follow a “linear and progressive [trajectory]” (Dilley & Scraton, 2010, p. 136); and as a result of this standpoint, it does not adequately acknowledge the lapses, interruptions, and participatory regressions that affect involvement (Brown, 2007; Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Gallant et al., 2013).

The lack of a systematic routine, in addition to experiences of deferred and curtailed involvement, may impress that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas are engaged in project-based leisure. Their leisure engagements of genealogy exhibit obvious signs of what Stebbins (2005) portrays as infrequent occurrences that are widely spaced in time, experienced with relative haste, and carried out when convenient for the individual. Yet, unlike the one-shot undertakings of project-based leisure, these amateur genealogists do not have “a known and definite period” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 70) for the conclusion of their leisure engagements. The open-ended and episodic nature of such leisure engagements may be a result of what Isabelle and Patrick describe as the interplay of internal and external forces. It seems reasonable to assume that the drive to experience

fulfillment in genealogy, either on a regular or irregular basis, is propelled by the internal. When the rewards of genealogy can no longer “hold its enthusiasts” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 13), thereby causing such enthusiasts to temporarily discontinue their involvements, an intervention of the external (e.g., outside stimuli) may be required in order to reinvigorate internal impulses. And so, while leisure engagements of genealogy may not be enduring in a rigidly systematic sense (Gallant et al., 2013), it is not necessary that they be concluded in any definitive way.

The skills and knowledge needed to engage in project-based leisure are, in the opinion of Stebbins (2005), routine, minimal, and insubstantial. To date, what appears to be absent in his discussions of project-based leisure is the notion that, although only requiring the application of conventional skill and knowledge, individuals may still acquire special skills, knowledge, and experience in the course of their leisure projects. It is proposed that because “project-based leisure fails to generate a sense of career” (Stebbins, 2005, p. 3), there is no long-term development of substantial skills, knowledge, and experience—consequently reducing the likelihood of achieving self-actualization. Though an inventory has not been compiled, it is gathered that Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas have indeed acquired a variety of different skills, extensive knowledge, and a number of valuable experiences. The special or specialized nature of their skills, knowledge, and experience has, however, not been investigated. In the SLP, “the acquisition of advanced knowledge, skills and abilities remains a defining quality of serious leisure [only]...[and therefore] implies that serious leisure has higher intrinsic value” (Gallant et al., 2013, p. 97).

The personal and creative aspects of genealogy stand out as particularly central to the leisure engagements of Madeleine, Patrick, Isabelle, and Thomas. Genealogy affords them the unique opportunity to have creative ownership over an endeavour that is almost entirely of their own making. For the sake of creative and imaginative expression, they encounter many of the same challenges, obstacles, and complications attributed to serious leisure. To that end, all forms of leisure comprise their own system of costs (Stebbins, 2007), none of which can be freely avoided. In counterbalance to the burdens of cost, leisure rewards the four amateur genealogists with positive benefits that are directed more toward the individual than the collective (e.g., family). Although overlapping in benefits

of creativity and discovery, the rewards of engaging in genealogy are not quite as hedonistic as the rewards of casual leisure. In that sense, genealogy can contribute in meaningful ways to the personal fulfillment of an individual. This fulfillment is predominantly derived from, but not limited to, experiences of learning, appreciating, sharing, connecting, and self-understanding.

On the whole, no generalizations can be deduced towards aiding a classification of genealogy within the SLP. Many of the qualities of serious leisure have been shown to reveal themselves in genealogy, but then again, “serious leisure...can be found in practically any activity” (Shen & Yarnal, 2010, p. 165). Rather than set out to gather evidence of genealogy as serious leisure—which many leisure scholars have been known to do based on the activity under study (Gallant et al., 2013)—this study presents evidence and interpretations of genealogy that are also congruent with Stebbins’ (2005) understanding of genealogy as a liberal arts pursuit of project-based leisure. “Though not serious leisure, project-based leisure is enough like it” (Stebbins, 2005, p. 3) that complications arise when making clear distinctions between the two (viz., in terms of time, frequency, commitment, career, social world, skills, knowledge, and experience). These complications may be a result of the way in which the SLP classifies forms of leisure “based on activity...[and not] *experience*” (Gallant et al., 2013, p. 94, italics in original). The experiential nature of leisure is generally situated at the forefront of our conceptualizations; but until the SLP takes its theories beyond a reliance on activity-based definitions (Gallant et al., 2013), genealogy may continue to remain in a state of classificatory uncertainty.

## Conclusions

Seeking to contribute to ongoing conversations regarding the relationship between leisure and tourism, this research study has focused its attention on the subject of genealogy. Genealogy encompasses the pursuit of tracing ancestral lineages, and seldom can it be found without reference to its near-relation, family history (Timothy & Guelke, 2008). Together, genealogy and family history are cultural practices that, owing to their popularity, have not gone unnoticed in academic circles. Recent scholarship in the area of heritage tourism suggests that the demand for genealogy and family history-related travel

is rapidly growing (McCain & Ray, 2003; Santos & Yan, 2010). The legitimacy of this demand notwithstanding, such travel may be becoming more frequent given the increased flows and fluidities of our contemporary mobile world (Franklin & Crang, 2001; Hannam et al., 2006). Charting the growth and prevalence of a special interest niche like genealogy-tracing tourism, however, was not the purpose of this study. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the narratives of amateur genealogists who engage in genealogy as leisure, travel for a leisure engagement of genealogy, and embark on a quest for personal identity by locating an intergenerational sense of self.

So as to understand why amateur genealogists choose to engage in genealogy as leisure, it was important to consider the conditions that may, or may not, have influenced such individuals to become involved with genealogy. Storytelling practices, knowledge of family history, and changes in family life were all examined as possible influences on this choice to pursue interests and curiosities in ancestral lineages. Initial involvements, therefore, seem to have been prompted by a need to recover collective memory, enhance an incomplete knowledge base, and seek answers to questions about ancestors and origins. In contrast to perspectives that may suggest involvements are motivated by the existential preoccupations of life in late modern society (Basu, 2007; Giddens, 1991), it was determined that these involvements stem from the fluidity of family relationships. Over the course of life, the (re)defining of family relationships can progressively contribute to the formation of discontinuities. Such discontinuities are inclined to weaken the connectedness that fundamentally binds generations of the past and present. Rather than allow this sense of temporal dislocation to further perpetuate itself, choices were made to renew the significance of these relationships through genealogy and leisure.

The amateur genealogists under investigation made use of their leisure as a way to form relational connections that, on the surface, contrast with traditional conceptions of social interaction. This contrast is marked by a social world of genealogy wherein the living and nonliving engage one another, and presumably, communicate (Lambert, 2006). It is understood to be at the intersection of this relationship that narratives of family history are (re)constructed. Family history narratives are a relational narrative of sorts, authored by amateur genealogists and influenced by culturally available discourses. Such narratives functioned as interpretative devices that allowed the amateur genealogists to

temporally locate, and historically extend, a sense of self. Many of them located an intergenerational sense of self by discerning inheritances from the stories of preceding generations. On account of these inheritances, the amateur genealogists were able to benefit from their leisure engagements in such a way that they gained meaningful and enriched self-understandings. Furthermore, it was revealed that a broadly conceived family history narrative provides a framework from which to establish continuities across time and with preceding generations.

Some amateur genealogists may perceive their leisure engagements as a means to embark on a quest for personal identity. However, for the amateur genealogists studied here, leisure engagements of genealogy did not constitute a quest for personal identity. Extending this consideration to the travel context, it could be argued that leisure engagements of genealogy are journeys of learning about self and identity. At times these journeys impelled the amateur genealogists to mobilize their leisure by way of travel to personal heritage sites, institutions, and documentation centres in ancestral lands. Travel also served as a metaphor for the imaginative journeys on which the amateur genealogists rely in order to locate themselves and their ancestors. In that regard, the travel experiences of these amateur genealogists cannot only be limited to that which is physical. Interpretations of genealogy from the serious leisure perspective (SLP) expressed that the amateur genealogists' trajectory in leisure was unstructured, situationally contingent, and relatively open-ended. Their engagements approximated both serious leisure and project-based leisure, thus resulting in an unresolved classification of genealogy. Even though this matter of classifying genealogy continues to endure, insights were gained that contribute to a clearer delineation of genealogy within the scope of the SLP.

Facilitating intersections of leisure and tourism has been advantageous insofar as that they have resulted in understandings which unsettle our thoughts, ideas, assumptions, and beliefs regarding the genealogy phenomenon. Given that genealogy is a leisure engagement which can, and often does, encompass travel, it makes little sense to ignore the place and relevance of leisure in tourism. Theories and concepts from the two fields were not simply borrowed with the intention of substantiating that leisure and tourism are more alike than different. It was already acknowledged going into this study that tourism



is a manifestation of leisure. Having addressed themes and issues from an integrated, as opposed to a dissociated, perspective, it became clear that genealogy necessitates different theoretical lenses. Actively integrating disciplinary perspectives—even if leisure and tourism are not considered to be conventional disciplines—is an essential ingredient in enhancing the descriptive and analytic capacities of leisure and tourism theory. The opportunity, as well as the challenge, of acquiring a more sophisticated understanding of genealogy in the future rests on our ability to ensure that intersections of leisure and tourism continue to be facilitated.

### **Limitations and Challenges of the Study**

The factors that limit this research study are disclosed with the intention of improving methodological considerations for any prospective studies on genealogy, leisure, and tourism. Given the small size of the sample, it is composed of individuals who are white, Canadian, over 50 years of age, and of Western European ancestry (viz., tracing mostly to the British Isles). It is not a representative sample, and thus lacks diversity in categories of age, race, ethnicity, and ancestry. What is more, an absence of reference to ethnic and racial issues limits the capacity of this study to effectively evaluate such issues. Confining the boundaries of recruitment to public libraries and genealogical societies in the Niagara Region contributed to this lack of participant diversity. So as to investigate the context of genealogy across a wide range of ages, races, ethnicities, and ancestries, recruitment strategies in future studies may need to incorporate an assortment of institutions and geographical locations. Also, it is necessary to express the belief that the genealogical society and public libraries utilized in this research study may not be demographically representative of a diverse Canadian population. As Hackstaff (2009) points out with reference to the USA, “multiple genealogical associations [or societies] are organized by racial, ethnic, and national identities” (p. 133).

Concerning the 15 individuals who expressed interest in this study, all responded in opposition to the idea of quitting genealogy. Such responses would be presumed to mean that each individual has taken on a serious orientation to this leisure engagement (R. A. Stebbins, personal communication, May 9, 2012). Thus, this group of interested

individuals does not sufficiently represent those people who engage in genealogy and family history research as one-shot and occasional projects (viz., from whom there would be no intention to continue with their leisure engagements after a set duration of time; Stebbins, 2005). Recruitment strategies in future studies, particularly those focused on a leisure engagement with conflicting classifications (i.e., serious, casual, or project-based leisure), may want to attract expressions of interest from at least two of the three possible orientations to leisure. Additionally, it can be argued that, due to the small number of people who expressed interest in this study, a more heterogeneous sample may have been achieved if extended (viz., over a longer period of time) and expanded (viz., over a broader geographical area) recruitment had been carried out. Nevertheless, this study was undertaken with time and financial constraints.

As an individual who has neither engaged in genealogy nor conducted research interviews, I was quite skeptical of my ability to interview participants about a subject that I had never personally experienced. The open-ended nature of life story interviews was advantageous in the sense that it gave participants a chance to be creative, adaptable, and spontaneous, or improvisational, in their performative acts of storytelling. Although encouraged to tell stories over the course of the three interviews, I observed some of the participants struggle to maintain this storytelling format. Managing the dual responsibility of answering questions and telling stories became, at times, too difficult of a task. For instance, I witnessed almost all of the participants lose sight of, or forget, certain questions after going into lengthy storytelling episodes. In other words, upon completing their response to the question at hand, participants would sometimes inquire about whether or not their multiple stories culminated into a suitable answer. These acts of validation may also have something to do with the wording and loaded language of particular questions (viz., those questions pertaining to self and identity). While I was not expecting to collect precise answers to my questions, I admit that I found it very challenging to interpret whether questions had been answered in any satisfactory sense. I experienced what Glover (2003) describes in the following way: “[narrative inquirers are often] met with lengthy stories that appear, upon first hearing them, to have little to do with the questions...asked” (p. 145). As a way to deal with such a challenge, I made sure to probe for detail and specificity, as well as to explore new avenues of interest.

Many of the participants' stories resisted the coherence of a temporal or chronological order; that is, stories were constructed in ways that did not always adhere to a rigid format of linear sequentiality (i.e., shifts in temporal and thematic organization). When situating a multitude of past events and experiences, Madeleine, Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle would often realize—during the act of storytelling—that such events and experiences took place in a different order from what was initially remembered. These moments of epiphanous insight resulted in a need to either abruptly end a story, or tell it anew. Therefore, analyzing narratives for where stories began, and where others ended, was an especially complex task. In addition, memory was found to be an issue for Madeleine, Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle. Perhaps due to their age (*viz.*, over 50 years), they sometimes conveyed an inability to construct accurate depictions of earlier events and experiences in their lives. My strategy to trigger recollection and facilitate recall was to give these storytellers ample opportunity to pause and reflect prior to formulating a response.

No two individuals can be expected to tell stories in an identical fashion. Hence, the storytelling abilities of each participant varied considerably. As a guide in this relational process, I could only encourage participants to tell stories in the form and style of their choosing (Atkinson, 1998). Some participants told stories almost continuously and without the need for further solicitation, whereas others required prompting in order to proceed with telling their stories. I encountered situations when some participants seemed to hold back in their storytelling, and other moments when they opened up without hesitation, uneasiness, or fear of judgement. Interestingly, most participants appeared more comfortable discussing their family histories—inciting them to show me books, artefacts, records, and photographs—than discussing themselves. Regrettably, this enthusiasm for their family histories left me with very little insight into the negative aspects of genealogy (see Lambert, 1996). Yet, it may also be the case that Madeleine, Thomas, Patrick, and Isabelle were reluctant to portray themselves and their families in a less than positive light. In sum, tellability (*viz.*, this notion that some stories are more tellable than others; Smith, 2010) was something that, I believe, had been decisive in shaping the participants' narratives. I, on the other hand, cannot be absolved of my role in the participants' negotiations of the tellable and untellable. The participants and I were

co-constructors of their narratives, and it was through our interactions that certain stories were told or not told, details were included or excluded, points were emphasized or de-emphasized, and questions were asked or not asked. All of these factors represent choices made by the storytellers and myself as the researcher.

### **Significance of the Study and Implications for Future Research**

This research study has furthered our understandings of the influences that draw an individual to pursue interests and curiosities in ancestral lineages. Although there are a number of different studies that have investigated the reasons for engaging in genealogy, few studies, if any, have researched the reasons as to why individuals become involved with genealogy. In light of the findings from this study, it may be appropriate to reconsider the role that identity questions play in prompting such involvements. Re-evaluating the significance of identity questions should not imply that, in order to grasp what influences initial involvement, identity must be done away with completely. Rather, identity ought to be examined in view of concepts like rootedness, embeddedness, and connectedness (see Basu, 2007; Kramer, 2011; Smart 2007). While this study alluded to the relevance of these concepts, additional research is needed to confirm that such factors, in conjunction with notions of temporal dislocation, lead individuals to turn to involvements with a leisure engagement of genealogy.

In the context of leisure, Kraus (in press) finds that little attention has been paid to how individuals become involved with serious leisure. What is more, the same observation can likely be made for both project-based leisure and casual leisure. In its own way, this research study has contributed to such an oversight by examining the contexts in which four individuals became involved with leisure engagements of genealogy. Taking into account the comments put forward by Kraus (in press), as well as remarks made earlier by Lambert (1996), it is apparent that the meanings of a leisure engagement in the present-day can differ from those created at the time when involvement was first initiated. Hence, it is recommended that future research examines the meanings attributed to genealogy at an early stage of involvement, because “what is initially important to people when they first join a leisure pursuit....may or may not change over time” (Kraus, in press, p. 13).

By focusing on the interplay of self, identity, and narratives, this study provided some additional insight into the social world of amateur genealogists. It underscored the centrality of an imagination that, in addition to the living, forms connections and relationships with the nonliving or deceased. Accordingly, further study into the workings and creativities of the genealogical imagination is in order. Lambert (1996) writes, “from a research point of view, we know very little about how ancestors are constructed, how life is breathed into them, and the place they occupy in genealogists’ imaginations” (p. 135). This dearth in knowledge may be partly attributable to the fact that traditional understandings of social interaction tend to disregard the exchanges among living and nonliving entities. If indeed amateur genealogists construct their deceased family, kin, and ancestors as “symbolically real” (Lambert, 2006, p. 332), then the appropriate course of action would be to subject this notion to empirical investigation.

Choosing to highlight the concept of intergenerational sense of self—a concept that originates in, and builds from, the works of Breathnach (2006) and Fivush et al. (2008)—has added a degree of originality to this work. It has shown itself to be an elaborate concept that was not only well suited for the study of genealogy and family history, but also for a narrative inquiry method. The word “intergenerational” is used extensively throughout academic discourse to refer to the relationships that exist between different generations. Yet, few of these discussions merge the intergenerational with self, identity, and narratives. By concluding that an intergenerational sense of self can be located in a family history narrative, and lead to enriched self-understandings, this research study has arguably advanced our understandings beyond that which was originally provided by Breathnach (2006) and Fivush et al. (2008). Consequently, it may now be an appropriate time for scholars to commit to further developing the concept of intergenerational sense of self. Family should continue to serve as the starting point for our analyzes, and moreover, it is advised that the relationship between collective memory and narratives be better integrated into its conceptualization.

Though proposing a new agenda of research for leisure and tourism would be the obvious next step in this process, unfortunately only a small number of recommendations can be made. Genealogy is still in its infancy, both theoretically and empirically, in the leisure and tourism studies fields. It therefore has the potential to be investigated from a

range of different approaches—whether disciplinary or multidisciplinary based. From a tourism studies perspective, encounters with heritage sites, objects, artefacts, landscapes, symbols, and souvenirs are recognized as indispensable to understanding the experiences of genealogy-tracing tourists. These tourists travel to historic places that hold meanings and identities, prompting them, then, to attach emotional and spiritual significance to such places. To continue this line of research, future studies should consider exploring the meanings and memories that genealogy-tracing tourists create when visiting places of direct connection to the familial or ancestral past (see Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Also, it could be interesting if these relationships with place were studied in a domestic context (viz., places outside of the ancestral homeland), and expanded to include different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (e.g., Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South American, etc.).

From a leisure studies perspective, while this research study could not take a position on the classification of genealogy within the SLP, future studies may attempt to employ qualitative or quantitative methods in order to overcome this limitation (see Gould et al., 2008; Stebbins, 2007). Still, whether genealogy winds up embodying serious leisure is, to some extent, “inconsequential” (Roberts, 2011, p. 6); in the sense that it just adds one more engagement to what is now a burgeoning collection of serious leisure activities. Alternatively, there is a pressing need to extensively explore project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2005), since “[little to] no systematic research...exists in its name” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 47). Nonetheless, while constructed as a taxonomic scheme for defining leisure in activity-based terms (Gallant et al., 2013), it is possible that the SLP may be used for purposes other than to simply classify different forms of leisure. This study has endeavoured to demonstrate that worthwhile insights into genealogy can still be gained by venturing beyond the ambiguities of an unclear classification. It is hoped that leisure scholars—specifically those working within the SLP—can make constructive use of these insights to investigate, for example, the costs and negative outcomes of engaging in genealogy. Furthermore, shifting our focus on genealogy and leisure away from prescriptions of form and practice (Gallant et al., 2013) may leave ample room to explore more fully the nuances and complexities of these leisure experiences. Applied within the sphere of the SLP, narratives hold much promise for leisure scholars who may be eager to deepen our understandings of the ways in which amateur genealogists experience leisure

over time. There is also a social and collective context to narratives that, if properly acknowledged and addressed, can reveal the multilayered and multifaceted nature of such leisure experiences. In closing, narratives lie “at the heart of the genealogical enterprise” (Lambert, 2006, p. 319), and only by embracing this most fundamental characteristic can research be directed toward rewarding paths of inquiry.

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## Appendix A: Poster of Invitation

**Faculty of Applied Health  
Sciences  
Brock University**



**CALL FOR INTEREST IN RESEARCH STUDY ON  
GENEALOGY**

*Have you caught the genealogy "bug"?*

*Is researching your family tree a "fulfilling" way to spend your  
leisure time?*

*Have you taken your genealogy research "on the road", and  
travelled within Canada or another country?*

We are looking for people interested in genealogy to talk about these interests!

By expressing your interest in this study and talking about your interests in genealogy with us, you are NOT committed to becoming a research participant. We are only capable of contacting a small number of interested people to go forward with participating in interviews. This stage may include two or more interview sessions, each of which may be approximately 90-120 minutes.

In appreciation for your time and effort, interview participants will receive a token of appreciation or small honorarium (\$25 gift card).

For more information about this study, or to discuss your interests in genealogy, please contact:

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This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (REB file # 11-285).

## Appendix B: Screening Questions for Recruitment

Hello, this is Gregory Higginbotham from Brock University. I am calling in response to your interest in my research study on genealogy. I would like to thank you for expressing interest in my study and I would be more than happy to answer any questions you have. Is there anything you would like to know about the study?

I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself and your experiences with genealogy and travel.

1. When did you start doing genealogy?
  - i. Do you see yourself quitting genealogy?  
Why? And if so, when?      *or*      Why not?
2. Have you ever travelled to another country to do genealogy?
  - i. Where did you visit?
  - ii. For how long did you stay there?

*and/or*

If not, have you travelled within Canada to do genealogy?

- iii. Where did you visit?
  - iv. For how long did you stay there?
3. What generation Canadian are you?

I will be contacting potential participants within a week to let them know if they have been selected to be a participant in this study. Since this study has a very small sample size, I am only able to interview a small number of people. If you are selected, we can then go forward with setting-up our first interview time and location. In the meantime, please contact me by phone or email if you have any questions or concerns.

Thanks again for your interest.

## Appendix C: Interview Guide

### *Interview One Guide*

Opening Statement: I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. For the first interview, I will be exploring a number of topics related to your life experiences as well as your experiences with genealogy and leisure. It is important for you to realize that I am not looking for direct answers to my questions. More importantly, I am looking to focus on your stories. I am most interested in the stories you have to tell about your life. That is to say, I encourage you to describe specific situations or happenings, and to tell stories about events and experiences in your life.

#### Opening Questions: Family Origins and Interests in Genealogy

1. Can you tell me about the ethnic or cultural background of your maternal and paternal sides?
2. Do you recall any stories being told during your childhood (or young adult years) about your ancestors? What can you tell me about these stories?
  - a. Who in your family took up the role of telling stories about your family's history (or about your ancestors)?  
Possible Probe: Why do you think this person took on the role of telling these stories?
3. Before you even started doing genealogy, how would describe your knowledge of your family's origins (or ancestors)?  
Possible Probe: How would you describe your connection with your ancestors at that time?
4. What would you consider to be the spark or trigger that made you interested in or curious about genealogy?
  - a. How would describe what your life was like at the time that you made the decision to set out on this path of doing genealogy?

#### Opening Questions: Leisure and Genealogy

5. What role does genealogy play as an activity in your everyday life?
  - a. How would you describe the way(s) you experience this activity [genealogy]?  
Possible Probe: How do you think your everyday life would be like without this activity [genealogy]?

Closing Statement: I don't have any more questions. Did we leave anything out of our discussions? Is there anything else you want to add before we finish the interview?

I would like to thank you for your time, your participation, and your stories. I really appreciate how you were able to tell such detailed stories about your life experiences and your experiences with genealogy and leisure. Hearing your stories has been an enjoyable experience for me and I look forward to our next interview.

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### ***Interview Two Guide***

Opening Statement: I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in a second interview. During this interview, I still want to focus on your life experiences. We are going to consider a number of topics related to those life experiences, as well as your experiences with genealogy and travel. Once again, I invite you to tell stories about your life, and any events or experiences in your life.

#### Key Questions: Family and Travel for Genealogy

6. What can you tell me about your immediate family:
  - a. Do you have any sisters or brothers?
  - b. Are you married? Do you have children?
  - c. Have all of your children left home? Do you have grandchildren?
7. How is your immediate family encouraging or supportive of you doing genealogy?
 

Possible Probe: What is it about your immediate family that makes them discouraging or unsupportive?
8. Can you tell me about your travel experiences with genealogy?
  - a. How do you feel genealogy influenced your travels at this destination (or any of these destinations)?

Possible Probe: Based on your travel experiences, what relationship does travel have with genealogy?
9. What is one of the most interesting finds you've had with genealogy?
  - a. Why is this particular find so fascinating for you?

Possible Probe: Can you tell me about any interesting finds during your travels?

#### Key Questions: Stories, Genealogy, and the Past

10. How would you describe the connection that genealogy gives you with your ancestors?

11. In what ways do the stories you create of your ancestors' lives have an influence on your life and who you are?

Possible Probe: What is it about these stories of your ancestors' lives – (as lives that were lived in times that go back generations and centuries) – that give them significance for you today?

12. What do you think the stories of your ancestors' lives are telling you about your past?

a. Why do you think your past has been *unchanged* (by your ancestors' stories)?

or

Why do you think your past has been *changed* (by your ancestors' stories)?

13. Do you feel that who you are as a person is influenced by what you are not able to find through genealogy?

a. Why do you feel that particular way?

Possible Probe: What would you like to know (that you have yet to find out)?

Closing Statement: I don't have any more questions. Did we leave anything out of our discussions?

I would like to thank you once more for sharing such detailed stories. I hope that by telling stories you were able to gain a clearer perspective of your experiences with genealogy and travel. These particular stories were meant to expand on the stories that you told in the previous interview. The third and final interview will ensure that we have covered all topics of importance to this study.

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### ***Interview Three Guide***

Opening Statement: I would like to thank you for allowing me to interview you for a third and final time. In addition to some of my questions on present and future experiences, I would also like to address any remaining oversights and clarifications. You can continue to tell stories and I would encourage you to maintain this format.

### Closing Questions: Reflections on Present and Future Experiences

14. Can you describe to me what you have done with all the information, records, photographs, and stories you collect from genealogy?

Possible Probe: Why do you feel it is important to put this material into that particular type of collection?

15. What are your future plans for passing on this material?
  - a. What do you want these people to get from reading this material?  
Possible Probe: Why do want these people to feel that particular way?
16. Do you see yourself quitting genealogy?
  - a. Why do you think you *would* or *wouldn't* still be doing genealogy in the future?
17. Where do you see genealogy taking you in the future?
  - a. Possible Probe: What type of goals (i.e., travel, leisure, or identity related) have you set for yourself?

Closing Statement: I don't have any more questions. Do you feel that we've left something out of your life experiences with genealogy, leisure, and travel? What are your thoughts about all that we've covered on your life experiences with genealogy, leisure, and travel?

I know that I have thanked you many times already, but I sincerely thank you for sharing some of your cherished experiences and insights. I hope that you were able to benefit from this study by achieving a greater understanding of yourself and a greater awareness of the meaning of your life experiences. I have benefited tremendously from this whole process, both personally and professionally. I look forward to revisiting your experiences during the analysis stage of this study.

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Additional Probes for Meaning and Understanding:

What did that mean to you?	Can you describe it to me?
Can you tell me more about that?	What happened?
How did it happen?	How did you experience it?
What do you think about that?	What is your opinion of what happened?
What meaning does that have for you?	Why does that story mean something to you?

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## Appendix D: Procedures for Thematic and Structural Analyzes

### Thematic Analysis Procedures:

1. Read the interview transcripts several times, and locate a story or multiple stories in short or long stretches of talk. Sort through stories, and initial impressions of the meanings of stories, by using different colour pens. Focus is to be placed on reading hermeneutically—that is, the parts (i.e., events and episodes) can only be understood in the context of the narrative as a whole, and vice-versa.
2. Develop a synthesized case study, or case analysis, for each of the participants. This case study organizes stories chronologically, and makes sense of the coherence of the narrative as a whole. It is important to account for the sociocultural context of the storytelling and the context of the research setting.
3. Analyze each case study in order to acquire initial understandings and document general impressions. Note any deviations, exceptions, or uncommon features to these general impressions as well (e.g., contradictions, inconsistencies, hesitations, unfinished descriptions).
4. Identify convergences, commonalities, and recurring regularities—with the use of different colour pens—on a cross-case basis. Select a label for each core theme, as well as for each subtheme, by considering its context and meaning in relation to the narrative as a whole.
5. Sort through the themes for repetition, coherence, and comprehensiveness.
6. Bring closure to this process when themes have been saturated and analysis has been exhausted.

### **List of (What) Questions for Consideration:**

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What is happening in the story? What are the characters doing?

What is going on and under what circumstances or conditions?

What is the purpose of telling this story? What is accomplished by its telling?

What does the story tell us about the phenomenon under study?

What does the phenomenon mean to the storyteller?

What meanings are attached to the phenomenon under study?

Who is the intended audience of the story?

What identities are performed or suggested?

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Structural Analysis Procedures

1. Locate a meaningful story, from a set of multiple stories, and read it over several times until an understanding is acquired. Be purposeful in choosing stories with which to structurally analyze—all stories cannot be subjected to a structural analysis.
2. Identify the structural properties or elements that contribute to the development of this story. Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model is implemented here:

a) <i>Abstract</i> – summary of the substance of the story: What is this about?
b) <i>Orientation</i> – time, place, situation, participants: Who? What? When? Where?
c) <i>Complicating action</i> – sequence of events: Then what happened?
d) <i>Evaluation</i> – significance and meaning of the action of the protagonist: So what?
e) <i>Resolution</i> – What finally happened? How did the outcome come about? What events and actions contribution to this resolution?
f) <i>Coda</i> – end of story

3. Sort through and interpret the structural properties of a story(-ies) for additional insight and meaning.
4. Identify convergences and divergences on a cross-case basis.

**List of (How) Questions for Consideration:**

How does the individual tell the story?
How does the individual give the events shape?
How does the individual make a point?
How does the individual structure the events?
How is the phenomenon under study constructed in the telling?
How does the individual make identity claims?
How is the self presented in the story?
How does the listener/audience influence the structure of the story?
Why does the individual develop the story in this particular way?

## Appendix E: Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Research

	<b>Brock University</b> Research Ethics Office Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035 Email: reb@brocku.ca
Social Science Research Ethics Board	
<b>Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research</b>	
DATE:	6/27/2012
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	SINGH, Shalini - Recreation & Leisure Studies
FILE:	11-285 - SINGH
TYPE:	Masters Thesis/Project
STUDENT:	Gregory Higginbotham
SUPERVISOR:	Shalini Singh
TITLE:	Locating inter-generational sense of self; Intersections of genealogy with leisure and tourism
<b>ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED</b>	
Type of Clearance: NEW	Expiry Date: 6/28/2013
<p>The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 6/27/2012 to 6/28/2013.</p>	
<p>The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 6/28/2013. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.</p>	
<p>To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <a href="http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms">http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms</a>.</p>	
<p>In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;</li> <li>b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;</li> <li>c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;</li> <li>d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.</li> </ul>	
<p>We wish you success with your research.</p>	

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Letter

**Informed Consent to Participate in Research Study**

Project Title: Locating intergenerational sense of self: Intersections of genealogy with leisure and tourism

**Principal Student Investigator:** Gregory Higginbotham, M.A. Candidate, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University  
(905) 380-8042 [gh05mj@brocku.ca](mailto:gh05mj@brocku.ca)

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Shalini Singh, Associate Professor, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University  
(905) 688-5550 ext. 4103 [ssingh@brocku.ca](mailto:ssingh@brocku.ca)

**INVITATION**

We invite you to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this research study is to understand your experiences with genealogy, your experiences with travel, experiences from your personal past, and experiences from your family's past.

**WHAT'S INVOLVED**

As a participant in this research study, you must meet the following criteria:

1. You have been engaged in genealogy for a minimum of two years.
2. You experience genealogy as an uncoerced, intentional, and satisfying or fulfilling form of leisure.
3. You are no less than a second-generation Canadian.
4. You have travelled one or more times for genealogy.

If these criteria are met, we invite you to participate in two or more interview sessions with an approximate duration of 90-120 minutes for each session. These multiple sessions give us the opportunity to extend the range of our discussions, follow-up on any interesting points, examine interpretations, and make clarifications.

The interviews will be scheduled based on your flexibility and availability, as well as our flexibility and availability. Furthermore, these interviews can take place in locations of your choosing.

The questions for each interview focus on topics related to your experiences with genealogy, your experiences with travel, experiences from your personal past, and experiences from your family's past. These interviews are audio-recorded for data collection purposes, and these audio-recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. You will be contacted throughout the stages of data collection and analysis in order to have final approval of written transcripts and to verify the reliability of the findings.

## **POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS**

Potential benefits of participation in this research study may include a contribution of knowledge to an academic community of students, researchers, and scholars who have interests in leisure, tourism, genealogy, and heritage. This contribution of knowledge is expected to help the academic community to better understand amateur genealogists, experiences of travel for genealogy, and the relationship between our personal past and family past. The potential benefits to you as a participant are the ability to gain a clearer perspective of your personal experiences, achieve a greater understanding of yourself, and share your cherished experiences and insights. Finally, there are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information you provide is always kept confidential. Your name remains anonymous and it will not appear in the thesis or any published report resulting from this study. However, and only with your permission, you may prefer to use your name.

Data collected during this study will be stored in a locked research office at Brock University and a secure compartment at my home. This data will be kept for a maximum time period of one year, upon which, all electronic data will be deleted and all paper data will be shredded. Access to this data will be restricted to me, Gregory, my faculty supervisor, Dr. Shalini Singh, and my advisory committee members, Drs. Trent Newmeyer and Scott Forrester.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you wish, you are free to decline to answer any questions or to participate in any stage of this study. Most importantly, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

## **PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS**

Findings of this research study may be published in academic journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available upon completion of a defence of the project or thesis. This defence is expected to occur in 2013. I will always be available for contact by telephone or email at any time before and after this date.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**

If you have any questions about this research study or require further information, please contact Gregory Higginbotham or Dr. Shalini Singh using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (*REB file # 11-285*). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 ext. 3035, [reb@brocku.ca](mailto:reb@brocku.ca).

Thank you very much for your assistance in this project!

**Please keep a copy of this form for your records.**

**CONSENT FORM**

I agree to participate in this research study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Informed Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_